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騎士 & 魔法

Knight's & Magic 1

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騎士 & 魔法

Knight's & Magic



一名日本青年因車禍事故與世長辭。他的靈魂在異世界獲得重生，成了名為「艾爾涅斯帝·埃切貝里亞」的美少年，而且依然帶著前世日本人的記憶。艾爾受到前世的嗜好影響，讓他在這輩子也成了重度「機械宅」。他在轉世投胎的新世界與巨大人型兵器——幻晶騎士相遇，樂不可支的艾爾為了成為機器人的駕駛員，立刻展開了一連串的規劃。他不僅把這個世界的童年玩伴拖下水，還將在這個世界橫衝直撞，這一切都是為了滿足他的機械研究欲！

於小說投稿網站「成為小說家吧」大受歡迎的機器人奇幻故事終於付梓成冊。機械宅青年歷經轉世輪迴，駕駛起真正的機器人大展身手！

騎士&魔法 1

Knight's & Magic

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Prologue

It is already evening, the glaring sun is slowly setting beyond the horizon, the shadows expand their territory. The roads absorb lots of heat during the day, and are releasing it back into the air now. This will be another night that is too warm to sleep comfortably.

This is K city K district, a city where the above scene is commonplace.

The city station is surrounded by skyscrapers, hosting a myriad of companies. 'K Softworks' situated on the 4th floor is a mid size software maker company.

In the cool air-conditioned office, several men stare silently at their monitor screens. The atmosphere is intense. They are the employees of K Softworks. For a mid size company, their daily workload is heavy, but the load today is exceptionally heavy .

"We have 3 days left to complete it..."

A man sitting at one end of the office mumbles with a hint of despair. He is currently battling with a time bomb ticking towards explosion with every passing second, also known as a deadline. Due to the downturn of the national economy, the anxious sales team accepted the case grudgingly, even though the demands are unreasonable. Even during the planning phase, the project managed by him had little room for error. Repeated failures made it even more perilous, the situation can only be described as 'hellish'. And there are even more pressing issues.

"Nakai section chief, Sato is down! He's not reacting even when we splash him with water!"

"Nakai section chief, we won't make it in time if we don't finish the coding today."

"...Nakai-san, Takeda's desk has a resignation letter on it..."

"Ah-- Shut up! How can we meet the deadline with things like this--!"

The man who was pressed into a corner-- section chief Nakai received a string of bad news, finally breaking down. He hugged his head and rested it on his table.

He knows there is no time to waste, but he can't finish the task and is short on manpower... The deadline is looming, but he can't find any solutions, pushing his psyche to the breaking point.

"Nakai-san."

"What is it now!?"

He raised his head after hearing someone address him, a man with a gentle smile appeared before his eyes.

"I have finished the case on my side, and I am ready to assist you."

"Oh... Kurata... Are you fine with joining in?"

The pain on Nakai's face was swept away, like a man who saw a ray of light in the midst of despair.

"I browsed through the specification manual and has gotten the gist of the situation. Can you let me handle the progress management?"

"Of... Of course, I might as well give you my password, you can flip through the management folders too. Take care of all that please."

"Eh, Nakai-san, I can't manage all that... Erm, the coding parts are holding back the progress, let me settle this..."

The man speaking with Nakai-- Kurata Tsubasa, sat down on the chair prepared by a colleague and started working immediately. He typed in codes on a text editor, read the progress reports while flipping through the specification manual as he gave instructions to the colleagues around him.

"Ensure the testing machine is operational, test analyst take this opportunity to rest. Erm, we will begin intensive testing after 12. For coding... Tatsu-san, can you complete 2 modules? Yes, I will do the other 10. Kiba, there are some weird parts in the specification manual, please amend it and resume testing."

He is 28 years old, considered part of the younger generation within the workplace, but no one is questioning his instructions. This is because of the track records he has built up after joining this company. After his recruitment, he instilled life into the half dead workers who quickly carried out his instructions.

Kurata has a unique nickname, since he is on the case, it means the ending of the job is in sight. Humans are realistic creatures, if they can see the ending, they can endure it no matter how tough it is.

"Alright, that should do it. I will start coding."

"Hey, Kurata, will you be fine? 10 modules... This is no laughing matter."

"Nakai-san, did you forget? My actual profession is programmer."

With his eyes half closed a fearless smile appeared on Kurata's gentle face.. He put his fingers on the keyboard, and all 10 fingers started dancing at a frightening speed. He typed in codes on several text editors that are open on his screen, going through the data like a torrent. The mature man sitting opposite him -- Tatsu, threw himself into his work when he heard the amazing typing sound.

"As expected of the "last line of defense" for the company, he has been handling all the troubling cases so far... I have to keep up."

Everyone put their heart into their work, the sluggish battle improves dramatically.

The radio broadcast announced the time. The clock on the wall indicates it is 5:15pm -- time to get off work. According to company policy, working hours have ended, but Kurata simply stretched his back and rotated his tired shoulders.

He has been salvaging the case for 3 days. Today is the dreaded deadline, but the atmosphere is no longer desperate like it was 3 days prior. The case was thought to be hopeless by everyone before, but it was rescued under his expert hands.

Thanks to him finishing the program in one day, and the team members testing and recoding without rest, they managed to barely finish the product before the deadline. Although Kurata finished so much work in such a short amount of time, he managed each part perfectly, a miraculous talent beyond comprehension. Sadly, his skill was outstanding because he was always handed the troubling cases.

After a series of battles, empty cans of coffee and energy drinks piled up like gravestones on his desk. Looking to his sides, he can see the warriors (test

analyst) who finished the hard battle smiling peacefully, collapsing on the beds made out of chairs. Kurata has decreased his sleeping hours to the bare minimum, and he feels that it is time to rest up.

"Alright, the client acknowledged the receipt of the product! We are done! Great news everyone, now we can rest easy!"

Kurata woke from his half asleep state and saw the elated Nakai in a victory pose. He thought about going home to rest, but decided to nap for a while. When he was ready to go home, it was already time for the last train.

Several days after the death march, the end of the month is here. Speaking of end of the month, people will think of -- that's right, the gospel of all working adults, payday.

Kurata turned off the computer and prepared to leave in a hurry. He was not alone. His colleagues also started to leave. Following popular trends, companies have cut down the working hours of office workers. Especially on payday, the companies have the obligation to let their staff leave on time. Although it is an obligation, this rule is often overlooked when things get hectic. But compared to the hellish time they had just a few days before, it is much more relaxed now.

Today is a happy Friday. Some are rushing to meet their family, others are gathering with their friends, getting ready to splurge . There are some who just want to rest at home, everybody is different, but for those getting their salary, the day they look forward to coinciding with the weekend is a happy occasion.

Kurata is the same too. Several colleagues who went through the death march gathered at his side.

"Kurata, want to get a drink? You were a big help, the first one is on me."

Nakai made a drinking gesture, with people related to the case such as Tatsu and Kiba standing behind him. Kurata was about to join them, but he remembered his planned schedule and hesitated.

"Ah-- Sorry Nakai-san, I have an engagement, maybe next time."

"Nakai-san, today is the day, Kurata's hobby..."

"Oh... That. Can't be helped, don't skip out next time."

"Okay."

Kurata watched the group leave, and headed toward his destination as well. The young, talented man known as the "last line of defense", depended on by everyone in the company, his unique hobby was well known within the company.

On this weekend, the streets are humid in the summer heat, crowded with office workers knocking off work. The way to the station is jammed with people. After walking some distance away, the traffic gets smoother.

"Over. Time. Pay! Get!"

A man --which is Kurata yelled in front of the ATM. If he did that in front of a manned counter, he would probably be reported to the police for acting suspiciously.

His emotion stemmed from the cold figures displayed on the ATM screen. The cases he handles are usually red alert and dangerous, his efforts are paid off in the form of overtime pay, so his savings increase steadily.

Kurata can't stop smiling, withdrew some cash and hurried towards his destination. His movements have no hesitation, a sign that he has gone through this route many times. A building appears in front of him shortly. That is a major electronics shopping center near the train station. On the 3rd floor is a huge toys department-- his goal.

A few hours later, a man left the toys department with the music that plays when the store is closing.

"As expected of the month end sale. This is great."

The man carried 2 full bags in each hand, double layered to prevent it from tearing. His backpack is also stuffed into a strange shape. His bags are filled with plastic models, in other words, he is a 'model nerd'.

"Surfacer, paint, tools have been resupplied... the modeling festival shall begin..."

For his hectic lifestyle, the shopping spree on payday and the modeling festival are his biggest joy. Maybe the dull and normal lifestyle is taking a toll on him, the amount of models he purchases increase with every year. It finally became a

monthly habit, he is totally addicted.

He wears his silly smile, walking home with his bags happily. The apartment he stays in is some distance away from the company, the station is between his residence and the company. He needs to make a detour when he visits the electronics shopping center, but it is not a big deal since he got what he is after. Kurata makes his way past the quiet residential zone humming joyfully. The traffic is very light at this hour.

He heard the sound of an engine breaking the silence, the oncoming headlights restricting his vision. The lights from the distance blinded him, and he hurried to the side of the road. The road is relatively wide, but it will be bad if it breaks the bag. Kurata frowns at the usage of high beams while driving in the residential area, but he pays it no mind and continues walking.

The dazzling head lights made his reaction fatally slow. The car is going straight at him with no sign of slowing and shows no intention to avoid him. By the time he realized it , it was too late for him to avoid it.

"Hey, wait..."

The roar of the engine reverberated in his ears, his vision was drowned out by the lights. He felt a chill down his back.

He couldn't get out of the way and collided with the car while hugging his bags. At the moment of impact, he heard his body make a frightening sound. As his body flew through the air, the moment before he lost conscious because of the immense pain, all sorts of emotions flashed through his mind. But he did not see his life flash before his eyes, or cursed his luck in meeting this accident.

(Ah, I can't make the models I just brought and the series of models that will be released next month, such a shame...!)

In his mind was the passion he had for the models he can't assemble anymore.

-- this just in.

Around 10pm tonight, a man collided with a car in K city S district. The victim was an office worker residing in the area, Kurata Tsubasa(28). An ambulance was dispatched after a resident made a report, but they failed to resuscitate the victim. According to the police investigation, the suspect was driving under the influence--"

Chapter 1

A place he did not belong to, a different world.

This world has no name, the people have not explored it completely. They think the continent they live in encompasses the whole world and one such continent is Zetterlund.

Zetterlund continent is split into the eastern and western region by the Aubigne mountain range. Divided by the mountain range, each region has its own unique environment. The west is ruled by several countries ruled by humans known collectively as the Western Union, the east is the Bocuse sea of trees ruled by powerful Demonic creatures -- the nest of Demonic beasts.

The eastern region of Zetterlund is not totally devoid of all humans. There lies a solitary human nation, known as the kingdom of Fremmevira. Because this country is on the border of the sea of trees , it is also the first line of defence in the war against the Demon beasts. To counter the roaming Demon beasts the nation raised an army of knights and to this day maintains it. They take pride in their role as the shield of humanity and the Western Union, and are known as the 'nation of knights'.

In the year C.E. 1268 the story with this continent as its background begins.

At the base of the mountain Aubigne, which reaches up to the clouds , is the Capital of Fremmevira, Känkänen. If you were from there to travel east for half a day on carriage you will reach a large town. The town is unique, with more than half its space taken up by a single facility. It is a fortified building made with bricks and stones, but doesn't feel intimidating and is not meant for military use. This is the education institute for children, known as 'Laihiala pilot academy'.

Knights defend the people against Demon beast attacks. As part of the glorious nation of knights, they are popular in Fremmevira and it is a highly respected occupation. As a country prone to attacks due to its geographic location, they need the support of a large army . Training knights is a priority for the nation, leading to the expansion of the educational organization for knights, Laihiala pilot academy.

A low thud reverberates within the building crafted through stone masonry.

This place has wide flooring made from stone, surrounded by stone walls and seats. This oval shaped training ground is situated in a corner of the academy.

In the centre of the grounds are 2 knights facing off with their swords. They are both heavily armoured, one with a sword and shield, the other wielding a 2-handed sword. The training ground is used for mock battles, the 2 knights are going through all sorts of drills, and the swords they are using are blunted.

The 2 knights took the exercise seriously even though the swords are blunt. They point the sword at each other, carefully gauging the distance. A gust of wind blew the sand into the air. The breath taking stare down ends and both of them launch their attack simultaneously, closing their gap in an instance. They move into combat range so nimbly it seems unbelievable that they are in full battle armour.

But there is something off with this scene, the ground is shaking with each step they take, emitting a low and heavy thud into the air. Normal human can't make such heavy sounds from their footsteps even if they are in full armour.

The answer lies in their surroundings.

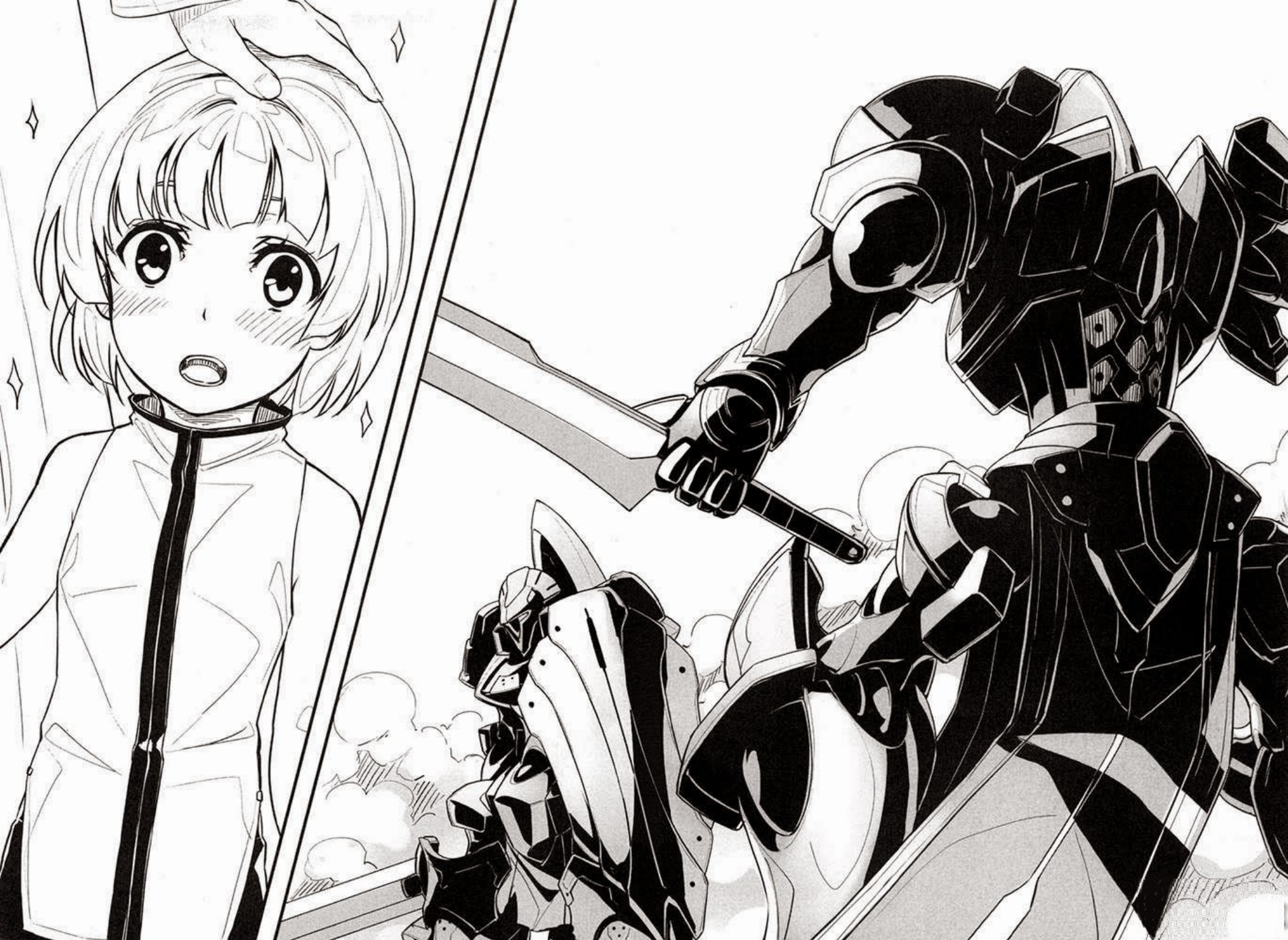
There are people on the audience seats watching the duel of the knights, but their figures are much smaller than the knights. No, the opposite is true; it is the knights that are too big. If you compare the size of the knights and the audience side by side, they are at least 6 times larger. It is only natural for them to be heavy, and it is not an exaggeration to call them giants.

These giant knights are not humans. They are actually Silhouette Knights, around 10 metres in height with metallic frame known as 'Inner Skeleton' and 'crystal tissue' acting as muscles. Fuelled by mana, it is a hybrid robot of magic and machinery, a giant knight. They are weapons made to fight against magic beasts, the strongest fighting unit of mankind.

A short distance away from the battling Silhouette Knights, several figures are watching the fight, one of them has exceptionally sharp gaze.

He is one of the battle instructors, In other words, his duty is to instruct the pilots handling the battling Silhouette Knights. He took in every single move of the battling trainees, giving off a serious air.

"It's ... Robots..."



A cute voice came from behind. The man turned and saw a beautiful lady walking towards him with a child in her arms. The lady has smooth flowing silver hair with a hint of purple that reaches her waist. Her hair sways in the wind as she walks, leaving a bright silver trail behind her. She has gentle blue eyes, pale white skin and looks very young, between 15 to 20 of age. But she is already married and has a child.

The demonic instructor whose face is feared by all smiled. People who know him might be shocked, but it is not a surprise if you are in the warm presence of the lady.

"Tina, what brings you here ? It's really rare to see you visit the academy."

"I just wanted to let Eru see his father's workplace, so I made a detour for our stroll."

"I see. Eru, what do you think about dad's job?"

The man asked the child held by his wife, but was ignored. The child keeps waving his short limbs about, staring intently at the Silhouette Knight sparring on the training ground.

"Eh, he doesn't seem to be listening..."

The man smiles as he pats his 3 year old son's head. The son inherited his mother's adorable features -- silver hair with a touch of purple, an oval face just like his mother when she was young and a pair of bright blue eyes. His sharp gaze shows a hint of his paternal heritage.

"Ara, Eru, you are paying more attention to the Silhouette Knight than your father, just like a boy. Do you really like Silhouette Knights so much?"

"I heard that lots of kid dream of being a knight, Eru seems to think so too."

Both parent smile as they watch Eru display his curiosity for this boyish interest, he is so cute. The little boy watches the scene excitedly while waving his arms and legs, unfazed with being the centre of attention. He focuses on the training ground without blinking, displaying his exceptional concentration . The man rubbed his son's soft hair for a while but gave up after getting no reaction.

"You really like it huh. How is it? Eru those are Silhouette Knights, gigantic warriors that defend our kingdom."

"Silhouette... Knight..."

The child seems to acknowledge the words of the man for the first time, repeating his words with a slur unique to toddlers and falls into deep thought. The man smiles bitterly when he see the child behaving this way, and returns to his post after conversing with his wife for a while. On the training ground, the gigantic knights finish their match and are preparing to leave.

"Right, let's return home. Prepare dinner and wait for daddy to come home."

The lady coaxes the child who kept looking back and is reluctant to go. They are going home.

"Silhouette Knight..."

The child in her arms watches the gigantic knights on the training ground until they are out of sight.

The child referred to as Eru, has the full name of Ernesti Echevarria. He is the son of Mathias Echevarria, instructor of Laihiala Pilot Academy, borne by his wife Celestina.

It has been 3 years since his birth. This is the age when a child forms his sense of self, a period when they become playful. But Eru is very sensible, understands his parents from an early age and is well behaved. Everyone feels that he is a bright kid, but his intelligence came from another source.

Ever since he formed a sense of self, developing his own character, he is aware of memories he has never experienced before -- the memory of a past he lived in another place. A place called Japan, civilization of computers, and the name Kurata Tsubasa.

A theory known as reincarnation.

Reincarnation means the spirits of those who have died in this world are reborn into this world over and over again. It is mentioned in Buddhism, all Japanese would have heard about this theory whether they believe in it or not. Kurata

knows about this, but he didn't believe it back then, and didn't expect to experience it himself. And he retains his experience from his previous life, a successful reincarnation.

But himself included, no one knows what happened. The only thing he is sure of is that he is Ernesti in this world, and was Kurata Tsubasa in the previous world. That's why compared to children around his age, he has a literally 'experienced' mind and a calm and matured analytical ability.

Because of the whim of his mother, he visited his father's workplace. The impact of this visit inspired him to devote his 2nd chance at life to this.

When the sun starts to set in the west, a lady and a child walk along the streets of Laihiala academy.

The boy kept asking about the gigantic knights he saw, and his mother answered him gently and patiently. Looking at her excited son, the mother cheerfully replied:

"You really like Silhouette Knights don't you, does Eru want to be a knight in the future?"

"Knight... Okay! I want to be a knight!"

"Ara, such a dependable child. Let's ask daddy to teach you when you get a little older alright?"

"Okay!"

No one knows what will happen because of this dimension travel. But he is certain that his 2nd life as Ernesti Echevalier is developing beyond his control.

The Echevarria residence is situated near the Laihiala academy.

Apart from this family, the people in this nation wake up early. As the sun is rising in the east, the young mother Celestina got up to prepare breakfast. When she is done, the whole family is up and they ate together just like usual.

The only child of the family Ernesti got up the latest.

"Silhouette Knight!"

Eru seems to have dreamt of something as he kicks off his blanket and leapt up from bed. He is unaware of his mother laughing because of his yell. Eru looked around him, realized he is in the bedroom and climbed back into bed.

He was too excited last night and couldn't sleep. He is still in a dreamlike state, smiling in his bed.

(Those are robots, and humanoid in shape, gigantic humanoid robots...!)

Ernesti -- or rather the Japanese Kurata Tsubasa shed a tear of joy in his heart for this unexpected blessing and can't stop smiling. Retaining the memories of Kurata Tsubasa means he inherited similar interest and hobbies from his previous life. In Eru's previous life he was Kurata Tsubasa, a heavily addicted robot nerd.

As a working adult, he spent almost all his income on his hobby, browsing modelling magazines and games, even searching for visual works at times. He put in double the effort into his hobby than others, it wouldn't be wrong to say that he is obsessed. But despite his obsession, he was still an ordinary man. He didn't have the passion to join the self-defence force just for the chance to operate a tank. But the situation is different in this life. That's right, gigantic humanoid robots -- Silhouette Knights actually exist here.

When he 'awakened', he was disappointed to find himself in a world with no models or computers in this 2nd life. But he is grateful from the bottom of his heart for this miracle, be it by chance or the will of a mysterious force allowing him to reincarnate in this world with Silhouette Knights. This is not a joke, gigantic humanoid weapons 10 metres in height actually exist. For a robot nerd like him, seeing the Silhouette Knights has enough impact to change his life. In other words, he thinks the reason for coming to this world was to pilot these gigantic robots. He has no basis for it, but he still believes this strongly.

He has the resolve, but his tiny body lost to his sleepiness, and he naps for a while more before breakfast is ready.

It is almost noon, Celestina and Eru are in Mathias's study room.

The study room is filled with simple but practical wooden furniture that is kept clean and tidy. Mathias is primarily a sword instructor, but he is involved in other fields too. The shelves in the study room are filled with all sorts of literature,

including picture books for children.

Tina sat on the couch in the room, resting the tinny Eru on her lap, reading the picture book slowly for him. She spoke clearly and calmly. Eru who was enjoying this yesterday listened for a while and started to fidget. He called out to his mother:

"Mom, mom."

"What is it Eru? You don't like this book?"

Tina tilts her head, but Eru's next words dispelled her confusion.

"I like books... But, I want to know more about Silhouette Knights!"

Tina set the book aside and studied Eru's expression. Looking at his bright eyes filled with curiosity and joy, she can't turn him down.

"Ara ara, I see. Although it is still early for you Eru, if you want to pilot the Silhouette Knights, you have to first become a knight."

"Knight... how do I become a knight?"

Eru has a fixed goal in mind, but he is still a 3 year old toddler in body. Even with the intellect of a grown man, he is still restricted in his actions, including the crucial part of information gathering . How does a toddler, with limited access obtains information? He has to rely on his parents.

"Let's see, you need to read many books and practice swordsmanship. Right, let your daddy teach you about swords. Your father teaches swords in the academy anyway. How about reading your favourite book where Silhouette Knights make an appearance okay?"

"Okay!"

Eru finally focuses back on the book again. Tina rubbed his head, took out a book related to Silhouette Knights and read it to him slowly. Eru listen to the story simple enough for a child to understand excitedly.

He imagined himself piloting the gigantic knight, standing before humongous demon beasts in order to protect everyone. He made up his mind once again. He wants to pilot a Silhouette Knight no matter what, the sooner the better. To

achieve this, he wants to use his mature mind set and do all he can within his power. He prepared a schedule for the future in his mind, but for now, he listens quietly to the story.

"Dad, do you have a minute?"

Mathias Echevarria who is resting in the study room heard the sound behind him. He turned around and saw his son Ernesti Echevarria run towards him. Eru who is 5 years old has a bowl cut, with his hair just above his brows. He has bright silvery purple hair just like his mother; the resemblance to her cute appearance remains the same. Even the strict Mathias with his merciless face smiles often in front of Eru.

"Oh, I have time. What is it Eru?"

"I want to ask for a favour, dad."

Eru is young, but he speaks clearly. His slightly slurred speech when he was 3 is now smooth at the age of 5. This child has always been polite to everyone since he was young. As his speech grows smoother, this becomes more obvious. But this doesn't feel weird, and actually complement his cute and small appearance. Mathias smiles happily as he looks at Eru's pleading face. His 'doting' towards his son is getting worse over time.

"Dad, I want to be a knight, please teach me swordsmanship."

It's finally time. Mathias was troubled, but he didn't show it on his face. He knew his son was keen on being a knight when he was really young. There is no problem with his goal, if he has the motivation, that will be great. But Eru is only 5 years old, it is still too early to teach him swordsmanship. If they rush it before Eru's body develops, it will be detrimental to him. Also, Eru looks more similar to his wife with every passing year, and is smaller in stature than children in his age group. To be honest, Mathias wonders if his son can handle a sword.

But Mathias still faces his son firmly. Since Eru is showing his resolve, he can't ignore this as an instructor or a father. Mathias advises his son not to rush, and start from building up his physical strength. He also informs him that aside from swordsmanship, knowledge of magic will also help him in his quest to become a knight, encouraging him to take it up.

"Magic... I understand dad, I will seek your advice on swordsmanship in the

future.

Looking at the unwavering face of his son, Mathias nods, promising to teach him swordsmanship one day.

".. That's what happened mom, please teach me magic!"

After making the promise with Mathias, Eru immediately went to Tina and asked her. Why is he asking his mother? Because Tina's father, who is Eru's grandfather is the current dean of Laihiala pilot school -- Lauri Echevarria. Tina accents gladly, gathering the necessary teaching materials within her means.

-- Magic.

It goes without saying that in Eru's previous life -- back on earth, magic does not exist, it appears only in stories. Most people only heard about magic when playing role playing games like dungeons and dragons. But this powerful force exists in this world, and knights use magic often as support when they fight.

Under the guidance of his mother who is doubling as a teacher, Eru reads textbooks related to magic.

From the moment Eru decided to pilot a Silhouette Knight, Eru has started taking action. What he has been doing is the basics of the basics, simply learning to read. For a 3 year old, this is a very early start, even the privileged class of this country -- the aristocrats won't start so early. Because of this, Eru can handle materials that are quite advanced.

It is natural for kids to detest studying, but Eru is not a normal kid. All his effort is for the goal of becoming a knight. When he thinks about piloting a Silhouette Knight, studying is no hassle for him, he can even read through all the textbooks from cover to cover. Because the contents are stiff, it is better to treat it like a game and enjoy it instead of thinking of it as studying. With the fast learning pace unique to children, Eru learns the contents at an incredible pace.



Tina is not a teacher by profession, but she is managing it smoothly. She is the daughter of a school dean and wife of an instructor after all. She satisfies the wishes of Eru, teaching him magic patiently.

-- In simple terms, magic in this world refers to the skill in manipulating mana to perform physical phenomenon.

All living things in this world have the ability to convert the 'ether' in the air into mana, and store a certain amount of it within its body.

"Mana is something like fuel, magic will be used in accordance to the content of the magic script to do things in the physical world through a catalyst."

Tina explains to Eru who is sitting down obediently.

There are 2 types of living beings in the world, divided to those who can use magic independently and those who can't. The difference lies in the existence of a catalyst within their body. For beings that can use magic, they have a crystal within their body that acts as a catalyst. For example, the strongest creature known as dragon possesses a catalyst, and their dragon breath is created using this.

"Humans don't have catalyst inside us, so we are a race that can't use magic."

Since human don't have a crystal catalyst, they can't use magic. From the laws of this world, this is a natural and undeniable fact. But people have learnt a way to use magic. This is the result of them using their weapon called wisdom. As a living being of this world, humans can make use of mana and develop scripts gradually to use magic, and use external catalyst to overcome their weakness.

With this breakthrough, humans who were always the weakest in the world, developed gigantic magic powered weapons after years of research - the Silhouette Knight. This makes the humans one of the most powerful races.

"Mom, since the Silhouette Knights are so powerful, and we have such a huge army of knights, we can build a bigger country right?"

"Maybe it can be done, but it is difficult."

Silhouette Knight might be powerful weapons, but it is a tactical weapon that

requires large amount of resources to build and maintain. It is practically impossible to prepare the forces capable of dominating the land. Humanity uses the Aubigne mountain range as the border to maintain peace on the west of the continent. Fremmevira remains behind as a screen to protect their foothold in the east. The stalemate has been going on for centuries.

"I will leave the details for history class. You will learn about it in more detail when you will start schooling."

Tina is talking about practical application of magic. As mentioned before, magic has to be done through scripts, and the construction and usage of scripts is performed by a virtual organ in the brain known as Magius circuit. In this world, all beings that are self-aware have the potential to use it.

"And Eru, scripts are sigils that perform specific phenomenon. First is the 'Architect'<TL: Kanji ==> Fundamental> sigil that perform basic phenomenon, followed by the Control sigils that coordinate and use Architect sigils."

By combining Architect sigils and Control sigils, the picture created will be something similar to magic summoning circles on earth.

For beginners in magic , the part they will stumble on is the construction of the script. Most people can manipulate Architect sigils immediately, but using powerful spells by using more complex scripts requires a great amount of practice. As humans can't use magic naturally, creating high level magic requires the accumulation of experience. Apart from perseverance, this also requires natural talent.

(Architect sigils that determine the phenomenon and the control sigils that maximize its effects. Both of them combining by a set of fixed laws... Right, I have seen this before, this is just like...)

Eru's occupation in his past life -- programmer, helps him in understand this part. In simple terms, the sigils and their interaction in the form of a script follows similar logic to program coding. The operation of the script by the magius circuit is similar to a virtual computer. Since the magius circuit is in built within the brain, activating it doesn't take time, which performs better than computers in his previous life.

After Eru grasped the logic behind it, he 'extracted' the architect sigil and control sigil from the text book and started using his magius circuit -- which is the human brain to start coding. With such a big amount of codes, even a veteran

programmer won't be able to organize it within their head; they need the help of software editors. To counter this, Eru uses the magius circuit domain as a software editor to plan and compile the scripts.

Because he is a beginner, he has no idea how much magic the people in this world can use. He didn't think that his ability to easily build and control the complicated programming language to be special.

Eru held a tiny wooden wand and focused with his eyes closed.

A small crystal was fixed onto the tip of the wand. That is the crystal catalyst, a miraculous item which allows human to use magic. For humans using magic, they prefer wielding wands with crystal catalyst fixed onto its tip. The wand in Eru's hand made a gentle 'Pashu' sound, and a line of fire shot out, leaving a scorched mark on the middle of the target board. He just activated the fire architect sigil with beginner magic -- 'Fire torch'.

"Wow Eru, that's great. Although it is just the architect sigil, but I never imagined that you can use magic so fast."

"But mom, the textbook says that this is the basics of the basics, anyone can use it immediately."

"It is true that anyone can activate it, but to hit the target so accurately requires practice. Eru has talent for magic."

No matter how good Eru is in programming, it is useless if he only studies the theory without putting it in practice. A simple target board at the backyard, and Tina accompanied Eru for practical training. They practice all types of architect sigils one by one, allowing Eru to get used to the feeling of using magic. After casting spells repeatedly, Eru started to feel weird... it felt like energy was gradually draining from his body. It is like the fatigue you feel after exercise, but different at the same time. This unique experience confused him, but this is natural when you expend mana. He pants heavily and breathes in the ether in the air around him, attempting to replenish his mana.

(... I didn't know it was this tiring. If I used advanced spells, I would have probably fainted because of shortness of breath.)

Tina who has been supervising him walked over with a gentle smile and rubbed his head.

"This is how it feels when you expend mana. If you don't experience it now, it will be troubling in the future."

"... I can't catch my breath, it feels painful. My mana is empty with just a little magic use, so depressing."

"Don't be discouraged. You are still young, lacking mana is normal."

"Will I have more mana when I grow up?"

"Hmm -- Let me think. It's a bit different, but just think of it as something like stamina. The growth of mana is not solely dependent on your body growth. It will also get stronger as you train your psyche."

"I understand. Mom, since that's the case, I will be doing special training to increase my mana pool!"

Tina gave a bitter smile, rubbing the head of the spirited Eru.

"Ara, what a hardworking child. Don't be too impatient, going too fast might be bad too."

Eru reflect on this, and felt that he is being too rash. Tina is right, rushing won't be good for him, and he doesn't want his mother who is accompanying him to worry .

"Yes mom. I will take it slow and steady."

Eru promised his mother with a straight face. Tina nodded and hugged him tightly.

Eru started his special training the following day.

With the promise with Tina and the future in mind, he will need to improve his physical and magical abilities steadily. Constructing script is Eru's strength, he will find a way if he makes use of his previous life's ability. The rest will depend on the mana he needs to use the magic. He persists in his routine of jogging, physical exercise, depleting his mana and recovering it. As he was going through his fundamental training, he found an interesting magic in the textbook.

He was looking up physical boost spells. Physical boost means literally

strengthening the capability of your body, including strength, stamina and speed. Eru's plan was to incorporate this spell in his physical exercise, training both mind and body at the same time for efficiency.

The spell physical boost is a high spell which is difficult to use. The effects of the magic is dependent on the script, the simpler the structure, the closer it will be to the architect sigil and the easier it is to control; the more targets there are, the more complex and difficult it will be.

The high level complex spell physical boost has the ability of enhancing 'every muscle fibre', strengthening 'all the bones' to absorb the impact, and the improvement in durability of the skin. There is a need to control the target of the spell which changes rapidly with every movement. To use the effect, the script needs to be activated constantly. This is why the boosting spell is on a higher level than big spectacular spells which do not require constant upkeep to maintain.

Normally, Eru would have given up at this stage and would have chosen a more practical spell. But he knew how to solve the issue because of his unique skills -- programming concept. He has experience in designing and coding software to handle multiple variables. That's why he skipped the beginner magic phase, and jumped straight into the 'modified magic' phase. Reviewing the structure of the physical boost script, Eru compressed the structure to minimize the number of variables, creating sub scripts that will automatically extract the status of the body. After compiling it, he just needs to design the user interface to make it easier to control so as to lessen the burden.

Complicated projects like the improvement of scripts is not something that can be easily done by anyone. But Eru was not aware of this, completing the improvement shortly, and the patch was a big enhancement. But even so, it is still a hard to control magic that strains the mind heavily. But with his extraordinary processing ability, it is not much. No one realized that a historical revolution has occurred, but for Eru, this is just a small step in his journey.

Everything is ready. Eru holds a wand in his hand, activated the improved physical boost spell and begun his daily training regime excitedly. But his high spirited trip ended in tragedy, he didn't even have time to feel moved by his enhanced physical attributes before collapsing a few hundred metres away because of mana depletion.

As expected of a high spell, the controls are complicated and the mana cost is tremendous. Eru felt down because of this basic mistake and returned to his

normal training regime for quite a while.

Even with the efforts he put in, he still needed 3 years before he could activate his physical boost magic for a sustainable amount of time. Eru is fuelled by his passion, moving towards his goal day by day.

Chapter 2

Laihiala pilot academy has a dormitory, restaurants and all sorts of shops. All sorts of Silhouette Knight repair shops are gathered there, including the lodging of related personnel, forming a large college city. Because Laihiala pilot academy is the top academic facility in the nation, the size of the city is not far off from the capital itself. The city adopted its name from the academy, and is known as 'Laihiala academy city', Ernesti resides in such a place.

The sun sets beyond the walls that surround the city and the night encompass the academy city. Apart from a select few, most of the shops have closed for the day, only a handful of people still wander the streets. The whole city falls into silence. A petite figure runs along the path formed by the rooftops of the building. The figure is dressed in black that is hard to see in the dark, moving like the wind along the roof.

And of course, this is the 8 years old Ernesti Echevarria. With the passage of time, his training has evolved from simple jogging into a round trip along the roofs of the buildings in the city. According to Eru, the wide field of vision and the undulating height of the buildings is perfect for training.

He learned from his failure in using physical boost spell in the past, and further improved it, changing it into a low mana cost magic, emphasizing just the legs for running. He has gotten used to it, even strenuous movement won't affect the script, his enhanced legs enable him to sprint at a very fast pace.

As he ran, Eru came to the edge of a line of connected buildings; the edge is akin to a cliff with the road looming from below. He took a deep breath, increasing his mana output. With the fierce reaction, he accelerated like an arrow fired from a bow, closing the gap to the edge in an instant. The moment he took his last step and leapt into the air; he activated another spell -- compressing the air in front of him, creating a dense air bullet. This was originally basic wind magic, air bullet. Eru explodes the air bullet behind him, using the release burst of energy to push him forward.

The instantaneous acceleration threw Eru's body into the air, forming a beautiful arch in the sky. He activated his body strengthening magic in mid-air, and cast another spell just before he landed. Another air bullet spell -- but the area of compressed air was much larger. He didn't fire off the air bullet just like before, using it as a cushion, landing nicely at the other roof. Eru rolls to reduce the

impact, running off with the same speed as before.

The year is C.E. 1273.

It has been 3 years since Eru started his magic training. He went through it daily without rest, accumulating a large amount of mana within his petite body. Normally, a child won't train so intensively in magic at such a young age, so it is not surprising for Eru to have grown so strong. And the regime also trains his physical attributes which increased dramatically, but it is a pity he can't use full body strengthening spells for an extended amount of time. That's why he invented low mana cost spells targeted at specific body parts, only using his full strength when it is necessary. He has also found a way to use other spells while moving at high speed. This training allows Eru's outstanding processing ability to improve, increasing his mana pool while decreasing the mana expended.

There is a reason why Eru focuses his magic on movement. He didn't spend all of his time on training, making time to play with other kids his age, probably so his parents won't worry. But he can't deny that playing like a kid again is fun. Eru slowly realized that his body is smaller than others, but he is not too bothered about it. But if his growth remains stagnant, Eru's lack of weight might become his weak point.

Naturally, Eru plans to continue training his magic, not willing to fail because of his lack of abilities. Even so, his body being so light means he has to put more consideration with regards to attack power. This is the reason he chose to strengthen his mobility. The speed will disrupt enemies and increase attack power as well.

(That's right, just like Ushi wakamaru overcoming strength with skills, the way Japanese likes it. Eh, although I didn't have much choice in this.) <TL:□ □ □ >

Eru thought about these menial things as he ran in the dim street in the evening. A normal training route, the daily jogging regime, but something unexpected happened.

"Eh? Someone is coming." A girly voice came from above. A stern voice followed: "Who are you?"

"...Is someone there?" the questions from both parties overlap each other. Eru has never ran into anyone during his rooftop training before, this was the first time he did.

They remained silent for quite a while. They met someone at a place that is normally devoid of people, so it is understandable to be cautious. One of them is dressed in black with his hood up, a suspicious outfit.

Eru observes the other party. The weak starlight made visibility low, but he can vaguely make out that they are a boy and girl pair about his age. Eru is shorter than average, while the two of them are relatively tall and thin. At a glance they don't look younger than Eru, but not much older either.

He can't make any headway with this silence, so Eru introduced himself.

"Evening, I am Ernesti, in the middle of a stroll. And you are?"

The two who were wary of this youth in black was stunned by the introduction. Eru can't make out the delicate changes in facial expression, but from the reflection of the moonlight, he knew the young boy squinted eyes.

"I am Archid, this is my younger sister..."

"Adeltrud... Eh, we were watching the stars... that's right."

Eru looked at the ceiling window behind them; the couple probably came up from there. The sudden encounter surprised them, but it was simple a coincidence. Eru decided to continue jogging.

"I see, sorry to disturb you. I will take my leave..."

"Wa... wait, don't go yet. A stroll you say? On the roof top wearing this?"

"Don't you think that is strange?"

"Hm, that's true."

Eru can tell they are taken aback from their tone. Even Eru would have been suspicious if he was in their shoes.

"I said it was a stroll, but it is closer to being special training. That's why I chose a place that is hard to run on."

"Eh... Do you really need to run on the roof? That's weird."

A simple matter to Eru was unthinkable strange to them. They look at each other

with skeptical faces and asked while tilting their head.

"...Hmmm, forget it. That means we are interrupting your training."

"Please don't mind me. Well, I should be..."

"Hey hey, wait! You said this is special training, so you run around this place every day?"

Adeltrud stopped Eru who was ready to go. Eru stumbled a bit and replied "Yes" and took off again. The two of them follow Eru with their eyes as Eru disappears into the shadows... His extraordinary speed surprised them, as they watch Eru accelerates and leapt off the edge of the roof. The large arc of his jump stunned them again.

"... Amazing, really amazing! What is that? That looks fun!"

"Wah, he is really running! Incredible, he flew off from the edge of the roof!?"

Archid and Adeltrud were excited after Eru left. They were stargazing out on the roof because of some unhappy events and had an amazing encounter. Their life changed drastically because of this encounter.

Eru, Archid and Adeltrud met again the very next day at the same place. Unlike the encounter before, the two of them seemed to be waiting for Eru. Eru gave up any thoughts of avoiding them and greeted:

"Evening. Watching the stars again?"

"Yo. Nope, we are here to see you."

"Yup..."

The pair smiled happily, visible even under the faint starlight. Eru wasn't sure of their intentions, but decided to go along with them. He can just run away if things go wrong, and pick another running route in the future.

"Erm, do you have to cover your head?"

Archid pointed out. Eru though it is rude too, so he removed his hood and sat on the roof like they did. "What is this about?" Eru press them. He noticed the two of them stiffened with awkward expressions on their faces.

"Eh, your names are Archid and Adeltrud right? What is it? Why the weird reaction ?"

"Eh? Oh, nothing. You... you are a girl!?"

"You move so fast, I thought you were a boy..."

Eru who takes after his mother has grown even more adorable , and is now totally a 'pretty girl'. The silvery purple hair that reached just over his chin was cut to the shoulder length, swaying in the wind. The dim moon light fails to hide his face. In fact, the faint light on his smooth skin gave his face a magical air. The pretty face doesn't match the amazing movements they saw the day before, confusing the pair . Eru looked at the 2 children with slanted eyes and says:

"No, I look like my mother, but I really am a boy."

"... No, there is a limit to how much you take after your mother. Are you really a boy?"

"It's true; I have nothing to gain from a lie like this."

"Oh...How... how cute, Ernesti..."

Adeltrud drew closer with her hands for some reason and Eru stepped back when he sensed the danger. Archid grabs Adeltrud's collar and pulled her back immediately.

"Eh... Ah, my name is hard to articulate, just call me Eru."

"Ah, you can call me Chid."

"I will address you as Eru then! I am Ady!"

「俺はアーキッド。」

『キッド』な。

で、そっちが妹の」

「アデルトリート。」

『アデイ』って呼んで



After the round of introductions, Eru was wary of the Ady who looked ready to pounce on him as he says:

"And so? What did you want to talk about?"

"Right, after you left yesterday, didn't you jump really high from the roof? How did you do that ?"

"Ah, that..."

"Also, please teach us the technique!"

Where did their wariness from yesterday go? Chid was chatting with him like old friends. Eru didn't understand why Chid was so excited.

"I can show you, but it will take a long time okay?"

"No worries. If we train with you, we can fly like you did one day right?"

"But you might be stuck at a bottleneck before that happens too..."

Eru warned, and started to explain his training in simple terms... the content about magic. Chid and Ady are quite smart, picking up the difficult content at a good pace. Because they understand the content, they frown at the task ahead.

"Isn't that gruelling!"

"So Eru is so amazing..."

"Didn't I tell you at the very beginning?"

The stunned duo groans, then lift their heads as if they just thought about something.

"By the way, why is your magic so powerful?"

"... That is because of compatibility, and I have been training for some years."

"Some years... How old are you?"

"Eight."

"Eh!? That's the same as us!?"

Ady was impressed. Compared to the explanation earlier, this was more stunning. Chid and Ady seem to be twins, both of them are eight years old just like Eru. Chid was in high spirit after hearing this, dismissing all of his worries. He has a face that says 'alright, we have to do this' and was fired up. Eru warns Chid who was rearing to go:

"Physical boost is a high spell; you can't use it without starting from the basics."

"Then just ask magic."

"...Hmm?"

"You are strong right? You know lots of high spells!"

"You might be cute, but you are so dependable!"

Eru's face starts to cramp. This development is beyond his expectation, and has nothing to do with cuteness. Their request was troubling; he wants to escape if at all possible. But when he saw Chid and Ady talking enthusiastically about the training regime, his conscience did not allow him to ignore them.

"Ah... This.... Eh, I understand. I will... teach both of you magic..."

"Great, I knew you are a bro!"

"Wonderful, no wonder you are so cute!"

"You are overestimating me, and this has nothing to do with being cute!? Wait, like I said, magic cannot be learned immediately. You have to start from the basics, understand?"

"I know, I know, don't worry. We will catch up to you in a flash!"

He felt uneasy with Chid who accepted so readily, but Eru still confirmed the training details with them before they parted their ways.

The following day, the twins Chid and Ady visited Eru's home. Not at night, but during the day.

Because they only met under the moonlight until now , Eru finally saw their beautiful black hair and hazel eyes. The brunette twins reminded Eru of Japan and he felt a sense of kinship with them. Chid's messy hair was short while Ady's slightly wavy hair reached her shoulders. They really are twins, having similar built and strong eyes.

"Welcome to my humble abode, please come in."

Eru gave up any resistance and ushered them in. The Echevarria residence was slightly bigger than their neighbours because of their relations with both the dean and an instructor of Laihiala pilot school. Chid and Ady looked around curiously as they followed Eru.

Eru's mother Celestina welcomed them warmly, her son who seldom brought friends home has two guests with him at the same time. She is a great cook and shows off her prowess, making her guests feel at home with her snacks and beverages. Ady was really delighted, she hit it off well with Tina and was about to follow her into the kitchen to make snacks, but was dragged off forcefully by Chid .

After the disruption, they went into Eru's room to learn basic magic. Eru's room was very tidy. There is only a table, a bed and several shelves along the wall. The shelves have textbooks related to magic, along with some storybooks for display. For preschool children, this room is too practical. The twins (Especially Ady) were planning to snoop around the room, but were stopped by Eru.

After this episode, the magic lesson finally began. Eru used the magic textbook he likes as the teaching material, starting from the fundamentals. He thought that the pair were too confident , but as 8 years old, they will grow tired of it and give up immediately. But Chid and Ady were surprisingly passionate about their studies. When they started their architect sigil practical session, they displayed admirable control, hitting the bull's eye after some attempts.

Eru remembered their dialogue yesterday, didn't they understand the explanation about magic immediately? This means the twins are excellent. Eru reflected on underestimating them as he gave feedback to the duo that collapsed after depleting their mana.

"What you are feeling is mana depletion. Because your mana pool is too small, so you should start by building up your mana capacity through training."

"Huff huff, this is tiring. So... How do we do this special training?"

"Deplete your mana every day. Your mana pool will grow faster than doing nothing. And it will be best to do some exercise, you can train your body and magic at the same time, it's more efficient this way."

"...Oh, that's why you are jogging on roof tops?"

"Yes. I told you it's not simple."

"That's right, but I still want to do it! I just need to keep this up every day! Isn't that 'simple'?"

Eru was surprised. He turned around to see Ady who has caught her breath with both hands on her hips, looking fearless. Eyes filled with determination and confidence, with a hint of a smile on her face. He looked at Ady, thinking nonchalantly (She is tall and will become a beauty in the future, but she is hard to handle.)

"... I see, please work on your architect sigils for now. You will be able to do special training with me after your mana pool grows."

"I don't know when we can catch up to you... But it will definitely be sooner than you think!"

"Of course! Just watch us; we will reach your standard in no time!"

Eru's impression of his first 'good friends' is improving gradually.

(They are tougher than I thought, I made some interesting friends.)

And so, Eru's training was joined by the twins Archid Olter and Adeltrud Olter, his life has gotten livelier .

Eru is not just learning magic. When he has spare time from his magical and physical training, he is also learning swordsmanship as promised by his father Mathias. This is the standard swordsmanship from the curriculum of Laihiala pilot academy. Chid and Ady also joined in.

Of the three Chid is the most talented in the sword . His body build is great for his age, which allowed him to surpass Eru in no time. His stance is proper and

won't lose to anyone in simulation battles.

They practiced the sword along with their magic. For children of their age, the 3 of them were incredibly busy. Eru does the necessary training in order to achieve his goal. He has gotten used to it after such a long time, so he doesn't find it intolerable. He felt that he did not push himself hard enough in his previous life, which motivated him to strive on. Eru realized the biggest motivation for humans comes from their desire.

But what about Chid and Ady? They harbour the same passion as Eru, living each day to the fullest. Eru's training has already surpassed the normal standards; there is no need to burden normal children with this. If they are aiming to be a knight, there is no need to work so hard. But they never complained about it.

What motivates the twins? Eru can't think of any reason for them to work so hard .

Even with their busy schedule, they didn't only train. They made time to spend with their parents or play with other children around their age. With the largest academy in the nation, the children have plenty of playmates.

The kingdom of Fremmevira has a problem unique to it , which is the existence of the Demon beasts. The situation here is different from the west of mount Aubigne, the kingdom of Fremmevira shares a border with the Bocuse forest ruled by the Demon beasts. Demon beasts often attack , threatening the lives and property of citizens causing the people to live in fear. Hence, the cities of Fremmevira have strong walls erected around them , protecting the towns and citizens.

-- Everyone in Fremmevira agrees to the construction of the walls, but the playful children find life within the walls dull and stifling. To expend their energy, they treat the entire city as their playground, playing around noisily. The sound of the children's laughter can be heard on the streets every day.

It is no different this day, a group of kids dash along the pavement. But on closer inspection, a child has fallen far behind.

"What are you doing... slow tortoise..."

When he heard the jeers of the children, the kid who has fallen behind stopped ,

panting, and waved his arms while protesting:

"Huff, huff.... It... It can't be helped! We dwarves can't run that fast!"

This protesting child is shorter than the rest; he has a strong and stout body along with short legs, a sturdy albeit slow build .

"Ah... Batson is slow..."

"What did you say? Damn...!"

"Slow Batson is angry! It will hurt if he gets you...! Run away...!"

The child named Batson is red from anger, running along with heavy steps, but he can't compensate for his short stride. The children disperse with a laugh every time he draws near, leaving the lonesome Batson behind.

"...Ku, damn..."

He clenched his fist in frustration. He is helpless about this, being slow is a racial flaw of dwarves.

Dwarves... a race originating from the northern mountains.

They live among treacherous, snowy peaks, residing within caves. As time went on , they started excavating deeper, and became skilled miners . While refining and processing the rich minerals in the northern hills, the dwarves became experts with all sorts of mineral resources, advancing their skills in crafting with them. They are renowned as the 'crafting race'.

Because of their environment, the dwarves have evolved over time in order to move nimbly in narrow caves. Their short but stout stature is their most prominent physical trait. They are also covered in muscles, having double the arm strength of normal humans. They are rugged in their appearance; the men have thick long hair and beards which start growing at the age of ten. By the way, their culture emphasizes on how spectacular their beard is and all men take pride in them.

But the isolated dwarves didn't spend their entire history hiding in the north. There are many dwarves who use their skills to set up smith shops all across the land .

The child mentioned just now... Batson Termonen was one of those dwarves. His parents have a smithy in Laihiala academy city, the reason being why he is playing with the local children . The games of children revolve around chasing each other or hide and seek, especially so for a city surrounded by walls. Batson didn't know how tough it is to live in such an enclosed environment with his short stride . His was also mocked for his appearance by the kids in the neighbourhood.

The children making fun of Batson are long gone. Batson gave up, heading home in disgust.

"Weird. Are you alone? Where are the others?"

The fuming Batson heard someone talking to him and saw the trio when he turned his head. The one in the middle is especially short, like a valley between mountains. It is the trio Ernesti, Archid and Adeltrud.

"It's Eru. You guys are probably looking down on me for being slow too."

The three of them were baffled by Batson's response , but quickly understood the situation . The dwarves might be slow, but they are strong and powerful. This means Batson is incredibly strong in a fight. He won't lose against multiple enemies if it comes to a dogfight. Batson had an argument with someone and achieved overwhelming victory, which is the reason for the current situation.

As Eru watched Batson walk away, he felt like pulling some pranks and laughed mischievously:

"Ah, he was bullied again... Alright, let's go after those guys everyone."

The twins listened to Eru's suggestion and answered indifferently:

"I'm fine with that, but how? We are fine, but Batson can't keep up."

"Right, that's why we will bring him along. Just treat it as normal training with Batson as training weights."

"Oh! I get it!"

"Let's go let's go!"

Chid and Ady got what Eru was saying and stood on either side of Batson. They

didn't care how Batson felt, and grabbed his arms.

"Eh? Hey... Hey! What are you..."

"Well, let's start our jogging exercise for the day!"

Chid and Ady started moving on Eru's command, ignoring the confused Batson. They treated Batson like a cargo and carried him. This technique can only be used after learning 'limited physical boost', allowing them to use strength above their physical limit. Batson was stunned by their amazing speed, unable to resist.

"They must be at the central square! Let's attack!"

"Ora!"

"Yeah!"

"Like I said, what's happening...!?"

Laihiala academy city is roughly divided between the school campus and the urban zone. In the heart of the urban zone there is an open space, known as the central square to everyone. It is filled with stalls during the day, and is the gathering point for all the children.

"Hey, will that guy catch up?"

"There is no way, he is too slow..."

"That's right; it will hurt like hell if you get hit by him!"

"Relax; just run away if he shows up. He is slow, you can get away easily."

It's the kids who made fun of Batson earlier. The group used some boxes as stools, biting into fruits they bought from some stall. They are gleeful from their successful revenge. Suddenly, they heard a loud scream from far away.

"Ahhhhh... Woah...!"

"Out of the way!"

"Where are you going! You guys better...!"

They noticed a familiar voice which surprised them. Wasn't that Batson who was jeered by them? The one person they want to avoid ? The group searched for the origin of the voice and saw Chid and Ady carrying Batson by the arms and approaching fast. They panicked and screamed:

"Woah, what... what are you...!?"

"Ah, found them. Now, Batson... launch!"

Eru pointed out the target while Chid and Ady threw Batson with a mischievous smile without slowing down. With a running start and a powerful throw, the short but heavy Batson flew through the sky. The group of children were slow to react; watching Batson arching through the air slack jawed. When they realized they are in the landing point, the kids scrambled to get away in a panic.

"Eh! Wah, idiot, don't come here!"

"Woahhhh, quick... hide..."

But it was too late to run. They were hit directly by Batson's rock hard head, the force smashing the boxes into pieces. They fell all over the place under a cloud of dust. It was so chaotic that the master mind Eru and his friends felt guilty as they looked at each other.

"...Did we... go too far?"

"Yeah... Right on target."

"Hey... I have an idea. I think we should get out of here."



"You three! Don't run!"

Batson shrugged off the broken boxes and stood up among the debris. As expected, the first to recover is the tough Batson, the rest of the children are still down. Batson was furious, sprinting towards the trio with a speed beyond any dwarves. The moronic three ran immediately.

"Goodbye, see you later !"

"Shut up, stay where you are!"

By the way, the kids left behind were caught by the adults and lectured for breaking the boxes.

Some distance away from the central square is a shopping mall away from the residential area. There was a building double the size of its surrounding buildings. It emphasized sturdiness more than appearance. This is the smith shop 'Termonen workshop'.

Batson chased Eru and the others all over the streets and finally ended up here. Compared to Eru and company, Batson was on the verge of dying of exhaustion after the chase.

"You... You guys... are too fast..."

"Thanks to our daily training."

"Huff... how did you train to be so good..."

Eru smiles casually. In terms of stamina, Batson has the edge, but he can't match up to Eru and his magic.

"Ah... forget it, I don't care anymore."

Batson is exhausted, and feels that all of this is just silly. He gave up and laid on the ground with his limbs spread out, and finally caught his breath after a long while. He gave a contented smile and laughed softly.

"But it was fun smashing into them head on."

"Hey hey, we can do it again if you like it."

"No way."

After a short while, Batson stood up calmly and pointed to his house.

"Eh, alright. Want to visit my place? I'm thirsty."

Maybe it's because they are near the workshop, they can feel the heat even from the outside. Batson's craftsmen parents are probably working there.

"Oh, I have never been to your place."

"Yeah... You will get hit if you disturb them. Don't be too rowdy."

The trio entered Batson's home and saw his father and a few craftsmen working in silence. Batson's father has a long beard and a wide body, it is easy to tell that he is a dwarf. His punches are no joke.

Opposite the work tables are the shop front with the finished merchandize on display. Batson explained about each one of them with pride.

"Look, all these are made by my dad."

All sorts of metallic equipment can be seen, from swords, lances, shields and armour to woks and pots. As expected of a dwarf craftsman, they are made delicately, every one of them is a master piece made to the perfect size and colour.

"Woah... Your place is selling lots of stuff."

Eru browsed the merchandize curiously while Ady followed him. Chid grew excited when he saw the weapons such as swords and lances. Batson was extremely pleased when they praised his father's work.

"Hey Bat, do you craft things too?"

"Ah... my dad seldom lets me touch metals, but I can do carpentry. I am a dwarf after all; even my dad praises my work!"

After hearing Ady's whimsical query, Batson pointed to an item in the corner of the shop. There are some simple wooden household items there. It looks plain, but the workmanship is good. Batson's skill is clear to see. The trio were impressed. At this point, something at a corner attracted Eru's attention.

"Can you make 'magic staff'?"

"... Magic staves ? I can make that if there are materials for it. I made these to earn some pocket change."

In order to use magic, humans have to use external 'crystal catalyst' to convert mana into physical phenomenon, and a magic staff is the most common example of that. Simply put, the crystal catalyst is attached to the end of the staff for ease of use.

Most staves are made from trees called 'white mist'. Because the wood from these trees is an excellent mana conductor, it is a popular magic ingredient. The plain staff crafted by Batson is also made from that.

"When practising magic, I always felt that..."

Eru's shifted his gaze to the staff on his waist. It was the magic item he has been using since the very beginning. It was shorter than most staves and fits with his small stature.

"What is it? Something wrong with your staff?"

Eru twirled the short staff wand in his hand and smiled at the confused Batson:

"Don't you think a magic staff is unwieldy?"

Besides Batson, Chid and Ady was puzzled by Eru's comment. They have gotten used to using the staff as a tool to use magic and have no complains. They don't get what he means.

Eru thinks it doesn't feel right because of the memories of his previous life. Because he remembers the world where science is king, he feels that this is awkward. Strictly speaking, magic staves are items that are used to cast spells. Apart from 'strengthening' magic, human spells are usually 'shot', releasing powerful effects. Eru thinks that magic a staff is a type of 'projectile weapon'.

Eru recalls a scene from his past in Japan... a room filled with models. Among

these collections, he owned an airsoft gun, a realistic looking 'Winchester M1894' rifle which left a deep impression on him. Firearms, especially rifles resemble magic staves. The correlation made him think is there a way to implement the shape of the rifle onto a magic staff.

"For example, the knights fight with a sword and staff in each hand..."

Even the knights whose main weapon is swords knew the importance of magic. Right handers hold the long sword with their dominant hand, the staff with the other hand. If a shield is equipped on the left hand, they will normally hold the staff behind the shield.

"I think it is a hassle to hold them separately, that's why I have been thinking about combining them."

"I don't get it... But even if it can be done, how do you want to go about it?"

As he thought , Eru had a stroke of inspiration. Guns and swords... These two simple terms made him think about bayonets on rifles. It is simply attaching a knife to the tip of a gun barrel, using the rifle as a melee weapon. This concept is brought to this alternate world by Eru .

"Yeah, I just thought of an interesting idea."

Eru smiled gently, making Batson feel a chill up his back.

Later, Eru returned home, sat in front of a table and drew the design he had in mind. His focus surprised Chid and Ady who tagged along.

"What is that? What a weird staff."

That is the first thing Ady said after looking at the finished diagram. 'Bayonet'... a rifle that fires spells with a blade mounted on it, the first 'magic staff' of its kind. For Ady who has only seen normal magic staves , it is very exotic.

The next day, Eru visited Batson's home again with the design in hand.

"Like I mentioned yesterday, can you make a staff like this?"

Batson was at a loss as he stared at the unexpected guest who showed up with a design in hand after just one day. He decided to look at the plan first and

started confirming the details. Batson made a strange face.

"Eru, what... is this?"

"Winchester Rifle."

"What? I never heard of a staff by that name, and the shape is weird... Why is the bottom so wide? And what is with this protruding piece here?"

"Well, this is known as the stock..."

Some things can't be explained with just a design drawing. Eru answers Batson's queries and explain in detail.

"Eh, I will give it a shot."

Batson didn't really understand, but he took on the job anyway. He promised Eru he will craft this strange magic staff. Eru was relieved, and felt this is a good chance to see Batson's artisan work.

Several days later, Eru visited Batson's place for the 3rd time on Batson's invitation. The unique weapon designed by him was presented in physical form.

The handle resembles the stock of a rifle, thick and slightly bent and there are no triggers. A crystal catalyst is attached to the tip of a part where the sight of a gun should be. There are no chambers and magazines as it is not an actual gun. In place of the barrel is a short sword fixed in place. This is the bayonet designed in this alternate world... 'Gun staff'.

"The carpentry is done by me, my dad helped me with the metallic bits."

"Did he lecture you? If it is too much trouble, making all of it out of wood would have been fine too."

When Eru visited a few days ago, he heard that Batson's father was very busy. Eru did not press him either, and just asked him to do what he can.

"Eh, for some reason he was very interested when I was making it and gave me a hand."

Eru nodded in agreement. He thanked Batson and took 'that' in his hand in a hurry. He tried out the size, weight and balance, the finished product is no

different from the design. The dwarves are incredible, their skills are truly astounding .

"Alright, I completed it as you asked... it turned out weirdly, what do you plan to do?"

"It will be quicker to show you."

Eru tried wielding the 'staff', and asked Batson for a place to test out magic. The two of them headed to the yard behind the smith shop. A few target boards meant to test out swords were erected. Eru aimed at one and slashed at it, casting an intermediate wind spell just before it hit... Sonic blade. He used the crystal catalyst on the staff to convert mana into physical phenomenon, emitting a shockwave from the blade, splitting the target cleanly in half. Eru took aim at the top half that is falling and cast an intermediate fire spell... fireball. It connected with the target and exploded, leaving a cloud of dust in its wake. The incredible performance of the staff made Eru smile, but Batson was stunned.

"How should I put this. This is too weird and out of this world ."

"Eh. Let's leave it at that. Batson, you did great! Seems that using magic in the future will be interesting!"

"Eh, as long as you are happy."

"By the way, can you make another one for me?"

"Don't be so shameless with your request."

Eru got the 2nd bayonet staves he wanted. These two bayonet staves officially named 'Winchester' were kept in a sheath made for them and worn on Eru's waist. Eru kept them with him at all times.

The completion of the gun staff which is suitable for close quarters fight and range combat is the key to enhancing his mobility and firepower, influencing his fighting style greatly.

Chapter 3

One day, Ernesti sat with his arm crossed in the living room at home, thinking with a serious face. The reason is the letter spread on the table before him, with 'Laihiala pilot academy student prospectus'. At the age of 8.5 years, he received an offer letter to enrol into Laihiala pilot academy.

Eru's family resides in Laihiala academy city, named after the best education facility in Fremmevira, Laihiala pilot academy. The education system is divided into 3 stages, primary school from age 9, middle school from age 12 and high school from age 15, taking 3 years for each stage. Most students will complete just the first 6 years of primary school and middle school. High school is similar to college on earth, for students who need further specialized education. It is customary to recognize all those above 15 as adults. Most people start their career around the age of 18, but depending on circumstances, some will join the workforce at 15.

Even though Laihiala academy has the term 'pilot' in its name, not everyone enrolling has the goal of being a knight or a knight runner. One reason is the sponsorship from the kingdom for primary and middle school education, so children from all social standings study here. Fremmevira's education system differs from modern compulsory education, a result of the special circumstances of this nation.

Fremmevira is known as the 'kingdom of knights'. Its name sounds great, but it actually means that 'battles' occur frequently. There is a large number of demon beasts lurking around the nation while majority of the citizens are farmers working on the vast fields, making them vulnerable to attacks. The threat has always been there. In order to secure a steady supply of tax and food, protection of the farmers became an important policy of the nation. They did not seek to eradicate all demon beasts because there seems to be an infinite amount of them.

The knights exist to protect the citizens, but there are lapses in their defence with so much ground to cover. The knights are usually deployed after the discovery of the demon beast, which is a passive strategy. This means the citizens will be under threat before the knights move in to intercept. Under this historical background, the farmers at some point hope to possess skills to protect themselves, which was fulfilled by the nation in short order. In order to educate them the minimum level of combat techniques and magical knowledge, they set up a ministry and related facilities. In the end, Fremmevira is not a peaceful nation; even the farmers need to pick up weapons to defend

themselves.

There are opposition among the aristocrats ruling the country on educating the lowly farmers to fight, but the policy remained in place to keep the nation running. From the end results, the policy was a success. By pushing for a minimum standard of education among all people, it unifies the citizens and their concept of pride as a nation. The improvement in domestic security is also a lucky bonus.

With this backstory, a trend of setting up education facilities was started all over the country. Laihiala pilot academy took advantage of its geographic location near to the capital and enrolled students from peasants to merchants and even nobles. The academy is thus divided into agricultural major, business major and pilot major etc. All majors include classes on combat techniques, but most of it was tailored to make the student employable. The school holds many different classes to accommodate the family circumstances of its students. Students need to attend at least 3 years of class and a certain level of skill proficiency to graduate.

Chid and Ady sat beside Eru who was studying the prospectus seriously. They already flipped through the prospectus and are eating the snacks on the table. When the snacks are almost gone, Eru is still deep in thought, which surprises them.

"Hey, what's troubling you? You wanted to be a knight correct? Just take the knighthood major."

"Erm, that was my plan... But there is something bothering me."

"Bothering you? Is it something like 'the knighthood major is too easy'?"

"No, that's not it... My goal from the very beginning was to be a knight runner."

Knights who are certified to ride on Silhouette Knights are known as knight runners. Eru's family knew about his ambition, Chid and Ady heard about it several times too.

"The number of Silhouette Knights is limited, and only the elites of knighthood major can become pilots. The knighthood major will take 6 years and is followed by the piloting course. When all of that is done and after the deployment process... It will be a long time before I am actually riding a Silhouette Knight."

It is not easy to be a knight runner; Silhouette Knight is a 'weapon', something created to protect the nation. That's why it requires years of training before you can ride in one.

Eru thought about it for a while and faced Mathias.

"Father, I have a question, does knighthood major allow the skipping of grades?"

Mathias frowns, his son asked something difficult. He understands Eru's worries, and also knows how tough it will be.

"From the efforts you put in and your magical capabilities, that is certainly possible... but knighthood major is different. Not only are you tested on your sword and magic powers, you will also go through ethics lesson, you have never learn about this officially correct?"

This is a blind spot. Mathias continued with a troubled expression:

"Silhouette knight piloting training is the final class before you enter pilot school. Students usually enroll at age 15... But for you... eh, if you are not tall enough, there won't be a suitable machine for you."

Everyone looks at Eru, the scene falls into hellish silence. Eru is smaller than peers in his age group, which is obvious compared to the Olter siblings beside him. But no one thought this part will be important.

Eru looks down in utter disappointment. He will need to wait 7 more years to pilot the giant robots of his dreams. He doesn't mind waiting, but no one will blame him for thinking the process is taking too long. But not everything will go your way. Eru wanted to change the mood in the room when he felt a shadow loom over him. He lifts his head and saw Tina standing before him.

"I'm sorry Eru. Because you look like me, so your height..."

Seeing his mother rubbing his head with an apologetic face, Eru open his eyes wide and shake his head.

"That's not it! Mother, it doesn't matter! I am still young, and this is not the only way..."

Eru stops suddenly as he remembered something, surprised by his own words and closed his mouth slowly. This inspiration gives birth to a new possibility.

"...That's right; this is not the only way. I am too focused on piloting and wasted too much time. I should be spending my efforts in the right place..."

Tina tilts her head in confusion as she watches Eru raise his head slowly with resolve.

"I can just make one myself."

"Make what?"

Chid asks in reflex when he hears Eru's fragmented words.

"Silhouette Knight. I will make one myself."

"... Ah?"

"...E...Eru? Are you serious?"

Eru looks more determined than ever. His words are too surprising; everyone in the room is at a loss for words.

"Wait... Wait a minute, what do you mean... by making?"

"I mean literally. All my actions thus far are based on piloting, but now that I think about it, I won't get my personal machine this way."

Everyone was stunned, was Eru thinking of hogging a Silhouette Knight for himself? Aside from a handful of powerful nobles and merchants, no one owns a personal Silhouette Knight. Creating and maintaining one requires enormous funds and manpower, going the pilot route is a short cut compared to this. But this is the common sense of this world, for the robot nerd from an alternate world; Eru didn't care about all that.

"That's right isn't it? The machine issued by the kingdom cannot be modified too drastically! Why didn't I think about something so basic? Customizing is the way to go. I will need related knowledge to modify one completely anyway... I overlooked this."

Chid and Ady put their hand on their forehead when they saw Eru's evil smile, they know that this is bad. The normal Eru always act maturely with a casual air. But he has an unbelievably passionate side to him too, erupting unexpectedly.

Chid and Ady felt that they are looking at Eru's true obsessive nature.

"You doing it for real? Eru..."

"Yes! I am sure that I will be wasting my time if I carry on this way. Setting the goal of building one myself will be a good hobby, and is more practical than saving money and buying one right?"

Chid thought either choice is crazy. But he chose silence intelligently. Mathias glance at the uninterested Chid and said sternly:

"Eru... I understand how you feel, but it is not as simple as you said."

"I know, father. But if possible, I want a personal Silhouette Knight, so I am going to do all I can."

"I see... alright then. But work hard on your knight lessons too."

"I will. I want to be a pilot, I won't take it lightly."

Eru has no hesitation on his face. Ady starts patting Eru's head for some reason, moving from being stunned to being impressed.

"Well, you are really willing to do whatever it takes for your goal."

"... I am a bit concerned with the way you put it, but there is no reason to give up when there are options for me to take."

"Amazing. Eru looks so cute, but is so passionate."

(Because of how I look, normal methods won't work on me.)

Eru looks out of the window; he can see the facility taking up half the space in this city... Laihiala pilot academy.

"Well... I am looking forward to the day I go to school in Laihiala."

Mathias and Tina smiled at each other; they don't want to see their son being depressed. Even though Eru's goal is ridiculous, but if it is Eru, he can definitely strive towards it wholeheartedly.

"... I don't want to lose, Eru is too amazing."

"Chid?"

"Noth... Nothing. Okay, let's work hard to be knights!"

"Yeah!"

Chid and Ady decide to major in knighthood too. The 3 of them decided on their goal within Laihiala pilot Academy and looks forward to their campus life in the future.

== C.E. 1274

The season changes and it is spring, the time for Laihiala pilot academy to welcome new students.

Laihiala pilot academy doesn't only take in students from Laihiala city, but also from the capital, the neighbouring city and all over the nation. Taking into account the possibility of demon beast attack and traffic conditions, most of the students leave for academy city early, and new faces can be seen around the dormitory these few days.

In the morning of the entrance ceremony, Ernesti, Archid and Adeltrud reach the campus along with Batson. With the dormitory filled with students from foreign countries, local students usually commute to school from home.

Laihiala academy city is surrounded by a giant city wall, but Laihiala pilot academy also has a wall of its own. Although it is to demarcate the campus grounds, but with the vast land of the academy, the continuous line of walls extends to the streets, becoming a well-known landmark.

"Now that I think about it, I have gotten used to the wall but have never gone in..."

"You can go in as much as you like from now on."

"You are right."

The group walked along the wall and reach the tall school gate shortly. This is the main entrance into the academy. Because the piloting students will ride on Silhouette Knights, the gate is adjusted to accommodate their height. The door

is wide open for the entrance ceremony today.

The 4 of them was about to enter with feelings of excitement when Eru suddenly stopped. Chid, Ady and Batson looked back with surprise, but understand when they look at the things beside the gate. On either side of the main gate are Silhouette Knights, welcoming all visitors. The group drag Eru who looks like he is about to prostrate to them and enters the academy.

The most important part of the schedule is the entrance ceremony. The ceremony is mostly listening to speeches by the teachers. After lunch, the various faculties will lead their students away and give them a brief introduction to the content of the course. Although they are divided into various faculties, primary school focuses more on the basics with common modules across the whole school year. The division is very vague, and the contents will only start to be really different from middle school.

The entrance ceremony is held in the grand hall. The group was lost in the gigantic scale of the campus, but Eru who had visited his father's workplace before knows the way and walks confidently there, with the other 3 desperately chasing him to keep the short Eru in sight.

"It's great that we don't need others to lead us, but it is easy to lose track of Eru. He is really small."

"Right, it will be easier to locate him if he is taller, but that's fine. He is cute this way!"

"I didn't grow much either."

Eru can't stand their noise and speak up.

"I'm going to leave Chid and Ady behind."

"Ah, I have an idea! We won't lose Eru if I hug him right?"

"I'm not okay with that."

As the group kid around, the grand hall was already overflowing with people when they arrive. Everyone here is a new student, as expected of the largest education institute in the nation. They thought it will be crowded to even stand in the grand hall, but they somehow found some space. The school have already anticipated this overwhelming crowd.

The ceremony begun in the grand hall filled with tense freshmen.

Grandfather of Ernesti... Dean Lauri Echevarria starts off the address, followed by esteemed members of the academy. The 4 children who listened to the speech with their backs straight starts to feel irritated as the event drone on. Although they displayed patience uncommon for children, they still make a bored face at the end of the ceremony. Fortunately, the torment stops before noon. With the end of the speeches, the entrance ceremony draws to the close and the freshmen files out of the grand hall.

It is lunch time and the group head for the school canteen. Some people brought food there; others took out their lunch boxes. Upper class men who are familiar with the place heads to eateries outside the campus. Everyone settle their lunch in their own way, but the cafeteria remains crowded. In this chaos, a prominent group sat in a corner of the canteen.

One of them is a pretty girl (?) with short silvery hair with a hint of purple.

The other two has unkempt black hair and wavy shoulder length black hair, a boy and girl who share a similar feel.

The last is a young dwarf with reddish brown hair.

From afar, this group has nothing in common. Even though the group drew many curious glances, no one has the courage to approach them.

"The canteen is incredibly crowded."

"But we found a place to sit immediately, which is great."

"They offered their seats to us immediately... I wonder why?"

Eru chatted with Batson as he ate his crepe cover in pie crust. It is a mini crepe in pie crust that is easy to carry, and fits nicely in Eru's small hand. Ady looks very pleased as she watches Eru ate the biscuit in silence.

"Any speeches in the afternoon? It's too long winded."

"Doesn't matter, you don't listen to them anyway Chid. Didn't you fell asleep?"

"Let's eat our lunch first. There are lots of people here, we should finish up and

let others sit too."

There are empty seats at their table. Eru felt embarrassed that no one else is sitting with them. At this moment, a female student ignores all that and walks towards them.

Her blonde hair sways as she walks in confident strides, causing a small commotion among the students. It is rare for her to show up here after all. She sat in the empty chair as if they were planning to meet up.

She is obviously older than Eru and the others, an upper class man. There are no standard uniform in Laihiala pilot academy, her clothes seems to be low profile but well made, with accessories that doesn't affect her movements. Eru guessed she must be from a well off family, either a daughter of wealthy merchants or aristocrats.

There are 2 types of reaction from them: Eru and Batson looking at the stranger in confusion, while Chid and Ady held their breathe staring at her. Those are not passionate eyes for a beautiful lady, but bashful eyes. Eru don't understand this, but he is sure the girl has connections with the twins.

The pretty girl who came uninvited smiles as she look at the tense twins, then faced Eru and Batson. Her smile became gentler as she introduced herself.

"Hello my cute friend. My name is Stefania Serrati. What about you?"

Eru was lost for a moment, but he put down his half bitten biscuit, sat properly and replied:

"I am Ernesti Echevarria, this is Batson Termonen, as for these two..."

"It's fine, I'm acquainted with them. Archid, Adeltrud, long time no see, I'm glad you are both healthy."

Stephanie has been smiling gently all this while, Chid tense up his normally sleepy face and says:

"Long time no see, Stefania onee-sama."

The stiff tone doesn't sound like something Chid will say. Stefania's face collapsed, but she regains her smile immediately.

"... Both of you are at the age to be schooling in Laihiala. Since we have the opportunity to study in the same school, why didn't you visit me?"

"Stefania onee-sama is in the 3rd year of primary school isn't it? Oh yah, Baltsar oni-sama is studying here too?"

"Right, he is majoring in knighthood, 2nd year of primary school, you will have the chance to meet him soon."

Compared to Stefania's attitude, the demeanour of the twins is weird. Chid is stiff in his tone while Ady is uncharacteristically quiet. Seems like they have family ties, but it felt unnatural. Batson routinely switch his gaze from one member to the next in this awkward atmosphere. Everyone has stopped eating. Suddenly, Eru finished his biscuit aggressively, contrary to his small stature. He ignored the surprised stares of others, wiped his mouth and smiled.

"Alright, we finished our food. The cafeteria is too cramped, it's not considerate to hog the table, let's go somewhere else. What do you think?"

"... Ri... Right. Both of you are in majoring in knighthood? There will be plenty of chances for us to meet, let's chat slowly next time."

Stefania gives a regrettable expression, pat Eru's head for some reason before leaving. The 4 baffled children were left behind. Batson wants to clarify things, but Eru says that lunch break is over and they should head for the classroom. He forcefully left his seat and head for the classroom. Batson wasn't satisfied, but he still went towards the crafting faculty, while the trio move towards the knighthood department in an awkward atmosphere.

There is nothing worth mentioning for the afternoon freshmen welcome activities. They are simply briefed on the schedule for the future and the contents for the lessons tomorrow. After the orientation, everyone is dismissed and the students prepare to leave.

Even now, Chid and Ady still seemed troubled. They are not joking like usual, not focusing and having an awkward air about them. On the way home, Eru lead the way and told them:

"I don't know the details, but don't be depressed. Class is starting tomorrow, so training is cancelled today, take a break."

Chid and Ady stopped. "Eh, Eru." Chid called out with a calm resolve.

"What is it?"

"Aren't you going to ask? Erm, ask about her?"

"If you feel the need to share, I will listen."

The twins sight and the air about them eased. They looked at each other as if to confirm something. After a while, Chid starts:

"Eru, we have something to tell you later."

"Alright, let's go to my room."

And so, the trio left campus and head for Eru's place and went to his room. As this is the place they hold their magic lessons, the two are familiar with it. They sat on the table and bed as usual, but the difference is that they are keeping quiet. After waiting for a while, Chid begins:

"Ah... Erm, simply put, our father is an impressive noble."

After troubling for so long, these words are too direct. Eru blinked and asked:

"So you are aristocrats? But you two have not done anything noble like? And even joined me for training."

"It's complicated... actually not. Our mother is not a noble wife, but a mistress."

"Eh, because mother is laid back. She says she don't mind being a mistress since she have us."

"Father's wife... well, is very jealous and conscious of others."

"Even if she don't like mother, her pride prevents her from feuding with a simple mistress."

Even Eru isn't sure how to react, so he just nods.

"Mother is too obedient, doing everything to appease others. In the end madam doesn't allow us to live under the same roof as her, making a big scene."

"And we were given a place to live, that's why we moved here. The living expenses are handled by father."

"Eh, that's how it is... Stefania Onee-sama you met earlier is the daughter of madam."

"Tiffa-nee is alright, but the problem is with the other two brothers. The younger brother is very irritating."

"He likes to go on a power trip, bullying us because we are scions of a mistress. Just like Madam."

The two of them complained nonstop and ends with a big sigh. Their expression is all twisted when they mention the brothers, making it easy to imagine all the things that happened between them.

"This brother you mentioned is in Laihiala?"

"Correct. He is one year older than us, so is in the 2nd year of primary school."

"I see, I have a feeling that there will be trouble."

Chid nods strongly. It's not a premonition; Chid knows that it will definitely happen. The life in the main house flashes in his mind. He had to bear with oppression and hardship back then, but he didn't spend too much time reminiscing.

"We are still grateful to father for funding us. But..."

"If they leave us alone, we won't trouble them too. But they like to mess with us, and can't stand us."

They probably recalled unpleasant memories, Chid is gesturing furiously while Ady said moodily:

"Since Tiffa-nee knows... That guy will probably come soon. If you are with us, you might get caught up in this too..."

Ady was depressed when she said this. Her usual confidence is gone. Because she gives off a bubbly impression, so the gap appears wider.

"I got the gist of it. So what's next?"

Eru was standing before them they realized.

"... What do you... mean by next?"

"Do you plan to defend, ignore them or attack?"

"Oh, should be attack... Hey!"

Chid unconsciously went along and was shocked. Eru was smiling as usual when he was talking about dangerous things. Even Chid who knew that Eru was not just a pretty face backed off.

"What is with you all of a sudden? I am glad you are my friend, you are scary as an enemy."

"You are helping us? As expected of Eru! You are so reliable, but this is our family problem, we can't trouble you."

"That's right. I have no idea how much I can interfere, but I don't plan to see my friends so troubled. Just call me whenever you need, I will be there."

"... Okay, we're counting on you!"

Chid and Ady nods strongly, they are smiling once again. Eru looks at them and thought:

(I didn't expect them to be nobles. Their sister didn't seem to hate them, why is that? No matter what, seems that there will be trouble...)

Eru thought about it from an outsider's view, keeping this matter to heart. Seems like the upcoming school days will be more chaotic than imagined.

After the tumultuous entrance ceremony, they started their school life the next day.

There are no scheduled lessons today too; the briefing took up half the day. This is extremely boring for 9 years old kids who just enrolled. Most people paid no heed to the teacher's presentation, the atmosphere screaming 'won't it end already' was clear for all to see. But one student was excited about some trivial details.

(There.. There is such a course...)

That's right, he is Ernesti Echevarria. And the matter that gave him such a big impact? It is the flimsy piece of paper in his hands. A table was drawn neatly on it; it is the timetable for all classes, probably basic information given out by the school to freshmen. What did he learn from the timetable?

(...There is a... 'Silhouette Knight Design basics' course...!?) But the timetable he is holding with his trembling hands does not belong to knighthood major primary school. You can infer from the name that this course is meant for knightsmith students who are aiming to build and maintain Silhouette Knights. It is catered for students in their 2nd year of middle school (around 13 years old). And this course has nothing to do with Eru who is majoring in knighthood of primary school.

But after reading such tempting words, the out of control speeding train... Ernesti will definitely go for it. He confirmed the knight faculty time table, and in the same time slot is one of the important course for knighthood majors... fundamental magic.

(I must attend this course no matter what... this class is in the way...!)

Suddenly, the teacher on the lectern felt a strange sensation, as if a starving beast has made its way into the classroom, sending a prickling sensation down his back. He shivered, stopped his lecture and look around the room. But he can only see a bunch of unmotivated kids, there is no famished beast here. The teacher shook his head and decided to treat it as a false alarm.

He overlooked the fired up petite student hidden in the crowd.

The knighthood faculty they are studying have two types of courses, being fundamental knight courses and generic courses. The generic courses are the same as other faculties, while the knight courses focus on magic knowledge, mana training and swordsmanship.

Normally speaking, human magic are classified into elementary, intermediate and advanced according to its power and ease of control.

As most citizens know elementary magic, they are also known as 'common spells'. Hence, middle and high spells are recognized as real magic. Faculties aside from knighthood majors will strive to be at the intermediate level. Since

advanced magic is also dependent on the depth of one's mana pool, only knighthood majors will learn it. Ernesti knew through experience that increasing mana pool requires plenty of effort. Hence, joining combat related careers such as knights require lots of effort in mana training. Allocating more time on mana training than other courses is the unique feature of knighthood faculty.

And so, the day to attend Fundamental Magic class arrives.

This is a memorable first lesson. The lesson was not conducted in the classroom as the students will be tested to determine their magical abilities and divided into different groups.

Eru's trio have learned magic before enrolment so their foundations are strong. Apart from them, there are some who have learned the basics too, so they will be in a different class from those without any magical training. The newbies will be in 'general class' while the experienced ones will be 'advanced class'. Advanced class might sound impressive, but the only difference with general class is the experience. Regardless, advanced class students are viewed as elites anyway.

This is because the advanced class has kids from noble clans and merchants, able to receive education in sword and magic before enrolment. This meant they have a certain standard of wealth. In a way, Ernesti with his family background in the education field and his disciples Archid and Adeltrud are exceptions.

The chattering express students follow the teacher to the sports arena. The fastest method to test magic capabilities is for the students to use them. And to cast destructive spells, they need to move to a specialized training ground surrounded by walls. The classmates gathered in groups of 2 or 3, surveying the straw man targets wearing old armour, rearing to go.

On the surface, this is just an introductory class. They won't be scrutinized because of their magic abilities at this stage, but it is a chance to show off and garner fame if they perform better than their peers. A lot of the advanced class students have confidence in their abilities. Everyone is in high spirit and did their best because of this.

One of the students cast a fireball, an intermediate level fire spell. An orange magical sphere appears from the staff, hitting the target with blazes trailing behind it. True to its name, the magic explodes in a ball of flames upon impact <TL:Kanji is explode fire ball>. The armour retained its shape, but is scorched

black, showing the explosive power of the blast. The students were in an uproar after witnessing this scene, very few freshmen knows middle spells before starting school, and have mastery over the powerful fireball. But fireball is an impressive spell and drains lots of mana; the boy was already at his limits after casting it. He was panting hard, almost to the point of mana exhaustion, but he still look very pleased.

The teacher supervising the exercise held high hopes for this batch. With such mastery of magic upon enrolment, he will be an elite magician if he put in the effort in school. The teacher tries to not display this thought on his face, continuing to record the results in silence.

"Everyone seems used to fireball, should we do something like that too?"

"Right... Ah, Eru, what do you want to do?"

Archid fold his arms lazily, standing some distance from the arena that is filled with excitement. Adeltrud hugs Eru as usual as she converse with him. She realized Eru was not being himself. Eru always gives off a gentle air, not he has a stern expression as if he is going to a battlefield. Ady tilt her head in confusion, her past experience tells her that Eru will only make such a serious face when Silhouette Knights are involved. But she has no idea how that is related to the magic test that is going on right now.

The test continues. Next up is finally Eru. His stature is petite when compared to his classmates, but his expression is stern like never before, he has a serious atmosphere about him. Eru spoke when he got into position.

"Teacher, I have a selfish request."

"Hmm? What is it?"

The sudden question surprised the teacher.

"If the result of the test exceeds the contents of the class by a large margin, can I be exempted from this course?"

"... What are you talking about?"

Eru's strange words stunned the teacher. He frowned deeply when he realized what Eru meant.

"...Ernesti Echevarria? What do you mean? Refusing to attend lessons? This joke is not funny..."

"No, I am very serious. I have another class I want to attend, so it will be a big help if I am exempt from this course."

The teacher was dumbstruck. He had been a teacher for quite some time, but he had never seen a student who is so overconfident before. It might be okay for a middle schooler, but a freshman in primary school? The teacher won't allow this request easily.

"How daring of you, I won't accept it so easily. Ah, right, since you said that, at least show me advanced magic. Then I will think about it."

"So it will be dependent on my results? I heard that very clearly..."

The students around them listen to the conversation and anticipate a good show. Most of them just want to watch the drama, only Chid and Ady knew Eru's strength and the inevitable result, and look at each other.

The teacher is also hinting that punishment will follow if Eru fails, and deliberately made things difficult for Eru. But the teacher is facing a demon who wants to give his whole life for Silhouette Knight designing; Eru will give his all without hesitation.

Eru starts to construct magical script in the virtual region in his brain... the magius circuit. He pushes his amazing calculation abilities, starting his processing sequence. He drew out Winchester from his waist, casting spells along the wake of his staff... piercing lance. That is a type of compressed fire spell, focusing the explosion on impact in one direction, increasing the piercing power of fireball. And he did not activate just one, there are 10 piercing lance appearing one after another in the air.

After completing the deployment of the piercing lances in short order, he took aim at the target, firing them off simultaneously. The long and thin flaming spears were right on target, the armoured target was hit repeatedly. The narrow interior of the armour was heated intensely after being pierced on impact, the straw man were torn apart. There were 10 piercing lances. The armour cannot withstand the devastation and was melting in a red glow before finally exploding.

エルは瞬きするほどの間に徹甲炎槍の配置を終え、直後に標的に向けて一斉に撃ち放った。

ピアシングランス



The teacher and students were speechless, unable to believe their eyes. Piercing lance was a middle spell, but was higher level than fireball. But constructing the script in such a short time and activating 10 of them is not very easy. And amazingly, Eru doesn't seem fatigued after casting such a powerful spell. This means that the mana cost of the piercing lances were not a burden for Eru's mana pool. This is not something freshmen who just enrolled yesterday can achieve.

This is more than enough, but Eru kept his word. He lifted his other Winchester... different from the one he used to cast piercing lance. The next script has been completed in his mind, a complicated and orderly spell, conjuring a magic much stronger than piercing lance.

The air around them starts to shift, forming a tornado in an instant. It went straight for the target from Eru's position with a large howl. The strong wind will definitely blow the straw man away if they weren't nailed to the ground. The furious wind and rumbles of thunder resonates within everyone's ear. The lightning created by magic is much more destructive than the piercing lances, turning the armour into dust in one strike.

Thundering gale... A melded magic using wind and lightning sigils, a real high spell.

Eru started training from age 5, so casting this series of spells (including high spells) was not a burden for him, so he was not even out of breath. When he looked back, he saw a startled expression. The teacher was slack jawed and stiff. Eru smiled happily and said to the teacher:

"How was that teacher? Do you agree to exempt me from this class?"

"...Eh? Ah, yes, do what you want."

No one protest or challenge this decision. And so, Eru earned the freedom to work towards a bright future.

Everyone stares from afar at the pleased Eru who gained victory with his overwhelming abilities. Even Chid and Ady looked at the target that was blown away with blank eyes.

"He made such a big scene, he was totally into it."

"Yeah, he can skip this class and attend the Silhouette design module of his dreams!"

"He was willing to go this far... Anyone who gets in his way will be burnt to ashes..."

Ady said as she backed away. Chid pulled her back with a bitter smile.

"That's wrong. He is not taking it easy because he has a goal, right? I will blow the target away too."

Chid rotates his shoulders gleeful with anticipation. Eru gave him a warning despite of what he did:

"Don't mind me, but is it okay for you to stand out? There is an irritating brother here right? Do you plan to challenge him?"

"What are you saying after causing such a stir? Like I said, we will stand out with you around anyway."

"I think ... you are spot on, I can't deny that."

"Right? I will be right back."

"Take care... Work hard!"

The training ground have not recovered from the disaster caused by Eru, everyone looked at Chid with sympathetic eyes when he steps onto the field without a care in the world. No one wants to be next, right after Eru's unbelievable magic display. Chid knew this, but still enters with his head held high.

(My tutor is amazing; it will be hard to catch up to him. I have to put on a good show too!)

For Chid who studied under Eru, he is used to Eru's shenanigans and knew he can't match Eru yet. That is why he can't hold back anything.

Chid steady himself, close his eyes and starts to construct a script with his magius circuit. To be honest, he is more proficient in power type spells and chooses to use one. He drew up the staff he favoured and held it high, then

pointed it at the target. The mana and script streaming into the crystal catalyst made the red orb glow brightly. He chose to cast a single shot spell, a middle spell more powerful than piercing lance... Flame strike.

An oval shaped magic sphere flew out with a spectacular trailing blaze, causing a bigger explosion than fireball. The reverberating sound acted like a signal, drawing the attention of everyone present back to the arena.

"... Wahhh!"

Chid fired a 2nd shot, the two overlapping explosion blew the targets away. For him, 2 shots was the limit for his mana pool. He was unsteady on his feet from fatigue. But he still smiled and passes the baton to the next person... Ady.

"You are still the same, only going for brute force... My turn!"

Chid and Ady are twins, but their strengths differ widely. Unlike Chid who is good in power, Ady specialize in intrinsic control. She carefully constructs her script, held her magic staff with both hands and aim at the target. A dazzling lightning appears the next second, piercing the target with the rumble of thunder. She chose the middle spell of the lightning architect sigil... Riot Sparrow.

As depicted with its name <TL: Kanji is lightning javelin>, riot sparrow turns lightning into the form of a javelin before firing it at the target. Lightning spells are powerful, but it is hard for the caster to direct it accurately. Increasing the accuracy adds additional burden on the caster, along with its difficult control made people view it as a higher class of magic compared to others. From the aftermath, the trio displayed incredible capability.

They ignores the atmosphere in the arena, high fiving each other in celebration. Ady hugs Eru and twirls around while Chid was so tired he couldn't stand up straight. Compared to the casual trio, the other express students felt uneasy. They were thinking: What are we going to do if we take classes with these incredible three?

As priory mentioned, the express class have many scions of aristocrats and merchants, a bunch of proud children. Their childishness and immature pride angers easily. But the scene before them is too amazing, shattering their young pride and competitiveness. They gave up and sigh deeply. Eru and the twins didn't care about their depressed school mates. Their school mates' troubles(?) are just beginning.

That fundamental magic class was seen as a catastrophe. A few days later, Batson leads his petite childhood friend and repeated for the hundred and one time.

"Ah... it's that way, that's the classroom you want... But, are you really going to study there?"

Laihiala pilot academy has many grades and faculty, and needs plenty of classrooms and facilities. Because the campus is divided by grades and faculties, a lot of students will only meet others in the canteen during breaks.

"Of course, how can I miss such an interesting class? Ah, here will be far enough, Batson."

"Yeah..."

Batson see off the youth entering the classroom and remained baffled.

"But this is the crafting faculty, and that is a middle school classroom..."

The atmosphere before class begins was casual, some was preparing for the next lesson, some are working on their assignments, and others are just chatting lazily.

"Quiet please, class is begin... It seems very quiet today."

The teacher said the usual when he enters the room, but he noticed that something is wrong and stopped. The students are usually noisy and rowdy before class starts. To be craftsmen requires a practical attitude. In other words, it is better to try it out practical instead of thinking about it. There is nothing wrong with this line of thought, but that means a lot of them just can't sit still.

For these students, this lecture based class is unpopular. It is rare for his charges to be quiet before the teacher enters. He might felt moved, but he felt that something is out of place. The 40 odd years old teacher surveys the students in the room and noticed they are staring at the same spot. He followed their sights and saw the culprit for this abnormal situation.

"... What are you doing here?"

The teacher asks the student sitting in the middle of the front row who did not

belong here.

This is a young and small sized boy, nothing like a middle schooler. Because the middle school desk is too large for him, he has to kneel on his chair. His position is upright and proper, with the text book 'Fundamentals of Silhouette Knights design' on his lap, waiting excitedly for the class to begin.

This scene is warming, but contrast with the situation in reality. This is a classroom in middle school, not a place for primary school students.

"I'm here for the lesson."

"I see, because the class is about to begin. But that's not what I meant. You don't look like a middle schooler."

"I am a primary school student from the knighthood faculty. I came because I want to attend this course."

Their conversation is going in circles, but the teacher is steady in behaviour, warning Eru calmly.

"Well, it is good to be passionate about your studies, but there are classes for knighthood majors right? You should come after finishing that class."

"It's okay. I knew all the contents of that class; the teachers are fine with exempting me. You can confirm this with them."

"... Is that so? Then it's fine. Alright, let's continue with the topic from the previous lesson, regarding the structure of Silhouette Knights..."

All the students retorts in their heart: "How is that fine!", but the teacher decides that he will lose if he feels bothered by Eru, and carried on teaching adamantly.

The outsider who hog the first row... Ernesti Echevarria glance at the teacher and opened the textbook happily, preparing to take notes. Being so pleased because of a lesson, the middle schoolers felt too lazy to retort. And so, the crafting faculty accepts this outsider and the course somehow carries on smoothly.

Before dabbling on the design of Silhouette Knights, you have to familiarize yourself with the structure, this is a simple rationale. But what needs to be done specifically? That is hard to answer. One of the reasons is the difficulty in

constructing of the Silhouette Knights. It requires crafting, magic and alchemy, there are a lot to learn, meaning it is a problem of the amount of studying materials. That is why only people who are going to make Silhouette Knights... Knightsmiths will learn how to design them. Knight runners won't have the time to learn all this knowledge.

This might be true, but we can't view the boy intruding into the crafting faculty... Ernesti. He is a robot nerd whose obsession wasn't cured even after reincarnation. He read volumes of robot designs and specification, even memorizing the name and models of robots. If you teach the methods of crafting a giant robot to this guy, what will happen? He will treat the textbook as a bible and study it religiously; preparing for lessons and revising the topic until perfection, going beyond the scope of the lesson and researching tons of information. His attitude is great, but his burning passion makes the middle schoolers older than him back away.

"... Comparing the current military model Cardatore and the previous generation Salodrea..."

As Eru listens to the teacher's explanation, he flips his textbook. He always sat in the middle of the first row, and after a few lessons, that became his permanent seat.

The elderly teacher scribbles on the black board with the clear sound of chalk, listing the basic structure of the Silhouette Knights. This includes the 5 main crucial elements... The 'magius engine' acting as the brain, the 'ether reactor' that serves as the heart, the 'crystal tissue' simulating muscles, 'inner skeleton' reinforcing the structure and 'outer skin' as the armour.

"As everyone knows, these 2 models have similar ether reactors; the difference in power output lies in the crystal tissues..."

The Silhouette Knights are powered by the mana produced from the ether reactor. The ether reactor converts the ether in the world into mana, simulating the organic functions of living things in the form of machinery. As long as there is ether around it, this device can keep on running. Normally, the mana produced by the reactor will turn back to ether and spreads into the atmosphere. Hence, there is a need to circulate within the crystal tissues to maintain its form as mana.

Crystal tissues are crystal catalyst that has been modified through alchemy, able to change its shape under the influence of specific scripts and mana. Apart of

using it as muscles of Silhouette Knights, this property allows it be used as mana batteries.

"The script in the magius engine has been refined, but the improvement is not significant. Because of its ruggedness, it has been used for over 300 years without major changes..."

The magius engine is responsible for controlling the heart and muscle. It contains gigantic and complicated magic scripts, allowing the pilot to control the Silhouette Knights.

The inner skeleton and outer skin are simply metallic frame and armour. But current technology cannot create the skeleton of the gigantic humanoid robot as a single part. They have to be made from the combination of smaller parts, welded together with physical boost magic and scripts to support the body weight. This allows the Silhouette to look tougher in its defence, but creates a flaw of the body being unable to support its own weight without the constant flow of magic.

Silhouette simulates the functions of living beings, an existence created by crafting, magic and alchemy.

"Please turn to the next page. This covers the Silhouette arms of the Silhouette Knights. Although it is not directly related to design, this is still important, so please study this carefully."

Silhouette arms refers to the range attack equipment used by Silhouette Knights. Surprisingly, the Silhouette Knights which is a combination of magical parts is not able to use range magic on its own. The magius engine can only be used to move the Silhouette Knight itself, and does not include range attack function. The knight runner is required to construct a magic script when spells are needed.

Of course, casting magic at the level of Silhouette Knights... known as overed spells... is impossible for humans. There are rare cases where an individual is able to process the magic, but constructing the script need time, and cannot be used in actual battle. For Silhouette Knights to use overt spells in the heat of a fight, they have to prepare the magic script in advance.

"For people aiming to be knightsmiths such as yourself, there is no need to study 'emblem graph' but you have to master the script at the level of Culverin."

Emblem graph doesn't construct magic through the use of scripts like the magius circuit of living beings. Emblems are drawn on the exterior of objects, which is used to cast spells... It uses the theory that scripts can be visualized in the form of a pattern. When using emblem graph to cast magic, the mana can be channelled directly to the object the emblem is grafted on to activate it. It appears to be a convenient technique so far, but because drawing the script needs a large physical area, it will run into the problem of the equipment being too unwieldy. If you take into the account the difficulty and effort in making them, the emblems are not really marketable for the citizens.

But the advantage of using emblem graph is the ability to prepare any spells as long as there is enough space. You just need to provide the power and the spells can be used without much control. Simply put, this technique is suitable for the gigantic Silhouette Knight which is made from the combination of magical parts; the only disadvantage is that each emblem can only use one spell. That is why the army created a variety of silhouette arms to deal with different situations. It is common to see Silhouette Knights going into battle with several arsenals on its back.

The bell from the distance rang when the class reach this point, announcing the end of the lesson.

"Ara, time is up so I will stop here. Remember to revise today's content... Ernesti, please 'have mercy' on us."

Ernesti watch the teacher leaving after uttering these words, he is not sure what he did wrong. He took notes plenty of notes today as well. By the way, his progress has already exceeds normal students by months.

After finishing classes for the day, Ernesti return home and took out his books to revise the content of the day's lesson. Although he meets up with Chid and Ady for training occasionally, he will head home and revise (?) whenever there are Silhouette Knights design classes.

Eru learnt a lot from the class. Thanks to that, he gradually grasps the basics of Silhouette Knight designing. But the more he understands, the more questions he has for the parts beyond the basics. In the construction of Silhouette Knights, the crucial elements such as crystal tissues, inner skeleton and outer skin are subjected to lots of wear and tear. Because of this, the country invested heavily in the education of engineers and alchemist. This ensures that forts in the front lines and towns with appropriate facilities can supply the Silhouette Knights with the necessary parts. A lot of crafting faculty students apart from Eru has actual

experience in crafting. But the details about the magius engine and the ether reactor... the heart and soul of Silhouette Knights are classified. The lesson covers their functions, but their interior structure remains a mystery.

Silhouette Knights is a major military force for the nation, and a problematic property for normal citizens to possess. Its distribution is controlled by the government and the construction methods of the core parts are national secrets. Even the kingdom of knights Fremmevira is strict about this. But withholding the crafting methods led to a drip in production efficiency, so it cannot be mass produced, making the value of each Silhouette Knight sky rocket. Silhouette Knight is treated as expensive tactical weapons because of this.

"...That might be the case, but I am not worried about the magius engine."

It is already known that the magius engine is used to control the movement of the whole robot. That means similar scripts can emulate this. Simply put, Eru intends to hack into the magius engine. It is an idea Eru came up with because of his incredible processing ability and a background in software engineering. But he can't do anything when it involves something that is not dependent on theory, emulating the fundamentals of magic in this world, the heart of magic technology... the ether reactor.

"But... without more clues, I will come to a bottleneck... After all, 'that world' doesn't have the concept of ether."

Uguu, Eru frowns and rolls around in bed.

He understood one thing from class; the ether reactor was made from a special mineral called 'fairy stones'. But the mining and usage methods are unknown, all information regarding fairy stones are kept secret. Although Eru's goal was to build his own Silhouette Knight, but the worst case scenario was to buy an ether reactor. But even so, the price of ether reactors made that plan impractical.

"Eh, no use worrying over it. Let's start researching from what I already know."

Eru mumbles and return to his desk. The notes he took did not have any blank space, so he took out another self-study notebook. He dipped his pen in ink and immerses himself in preparation, revision, a time to research his hobby. Eru lives an incredibly busy life, but it was a blissful life according to him.

Eru's student life traversing between the knighthoods and crafting faculty

continued for some time.

In the beginning, others were irritated by Eru's unprecedented actions, but they got used to it with the passage of time. Everyone starts to notice his cute features Eru inherited from his mother. The short Eru who happily listened to the fundamentals of Silhouette Knight Design was treated like a mascot, and Eru have gotten used to being patted on the head as a greeting. And one day...

"Ara, you are..."

Eru finished his crafting classes and was on the way back to knighthood faculty. He heard a familiar voice. He looked back and saw a lady with wavy blond hair, nice pair of eye brows and slightly drooping blue eyes that is squinting because of a smile.

"You are Ernesti... right?"

Archid and Adeltrud's sister... Stefania Serrati said as she walks to his side, bending down with a smile to accommodate Eru's height. Eru replied politely making her even happier.

"Ara, I remember you are the same grade as Archid right? Why are you here?"

Even though she looks joyful, she still asked. This is the secondary school campus, not a place a primary school student like Eru should be visiting. When she heard Eru's honest reply that he is attending middle school crafting course, her eyes open wide from shock.

"Eh, you are really smart, but why are you rushing to learn this?"

In a way, this is an obvious question. A student will be hard pressed handling the work at their grade level. In the long history of Laihiala pilot academy, there are very few such independent students. Eru's answer was very simple and to the point.

"Because I'm interested."

"Interest...? Even though its school work? Hmm... I see, you are a bit special."

Because there is another class, the two chat as they walk. Eru's action is unpredictable. Stefania was surprised sometimes, patted his head sometimes and was always smiling in a great mood.

As class just ended, there are lots of commuting students in the corridor, but they are shocked by the sight of the blonde girl and silver haired boy, giving way to them. Thanks to this, their journey proceeded smoothly, reaching the freshmen campus of primary school in no time. Stefania is in the 3rd year of primary school and needs to go to another campus. As she was leaving Eru reluctantly...

"Ah, Eru... found!"

Someone ran over at a high speed, it is Adeltrud who saw Eru by coincidence. The petite Eru is easily hidden when in a crowd, but with everyone avoiding him, he is readily discovered. Adeltrud looks gleeful when she was coming over, but stopped when she saw her sister besides Eru.

"Ah, Onee... Onee sama"

"Ara, Adeltrud."

Ady alternate her eyes between the two of them, and seems to be quizzing Eru what is going on with her eyes. Eru didn't give a direct answer and smile awkwardly. Stefania smiled gently as she approach Ady. From their previous encounter, Ady seems to be bad at dealing with her sister of a different mother, but Stefania doesn't seem to be bothered.

"Don't be so guarded, I won't bully you."

"Yes..."

Seeing Ady act so hesitant despite answering obediently, the two of them smiled bitterly.

"But why is Eru together with Onee sama?"

"Ara, it's simple... because I like smart and cute kids!"

Stefania places her hands on her hips and declares confidently. What a forceful way of putting it. Ady looks like she is frozen on the spot, convinced by Stefania. As expected of sisters, Eru thought.

"I have my eyes on him the last time we met, and he is the centre of some 'topics'. We chatted just now, and I discovered that this child is smart and cute!"

Stefania gets more excited as she speaks, finally giving in and hugs Eru.

"Nah, Eru wants to be a knight right? How about this? Want to protect onee chan as my knight? I can welcome you with 3 meals a day and sleeping together."

"Wait... wait, no! Eru is my soft toy!"

(What is with this family, scary. And Miss Ady, what do you mean by soft toy?)

The stiff Ady who was rooted because of the impact of the confession is yelling now, snatching Eru back. She might be too tense, even her tone has reverted back to normal. Stefania is smiling coldly. Because she is beautiful, this makes her even scarier. Eru saw her close her hands as she said quietly: "Ara, so that's how it is~". Eru decides to pretend he didn't see anything.

"Ady, your tone is back to normal."

Ady covers her mouth; her face seems to be saying 'this is bad'. Stefania shakes her head immediately. "It's okay. You don't need to try so hard in school. I am not like Baltsar and be petty about such things."

"Since Onee sama... says that..."

"Before that, Ady? Can you let go?"

"Eh? Ah, sorry. You are just the right size so I hugged you without thinking..."

Eru breaks free from Ady while Stefania looks at her longingly.

"Yeah... Eru's height is just nice for a hug..."

"That's right Onee sama, and his hair so soft and smooth..."

"Adeltrud... as expected of my sister!"

"Onee sama..."

Eru put some distance between the perverted sisters who are holding hands. There are many places he wants to retort, but Stefania seems so happy. Maybe she is just joking with Eru as an excuse to be closer to her sister. He decides to

think of it that way and hope it is true.

The sisters ignore Eru who is averting his gaze, and talks about how much they love cute things. Their discussion is so passionate that you can see a pink aura around them. Eru feels like escaping reality, thinking 'just do what you girls want'. He suddenly remembers an important thing.

"Ah, the next lesson is starting."

The bell signalling the start of the class rings as if on cue. The three of them rush to their classroom in a panic, but unfortunately, they arrived late and were lectured by the teacher.

"Oh, isn't that Archid? It's been a while." Just as Eru and the others are talking noisily, Chid and someone else met by coincidence in another place. This is the number one person Chid doesn't want to meet... The brother of Chid and Ady from another mother... Baltsar Serrati, someone who always picks on them.

Baltsar has normal features on a decent face, but his scowling smile is a minus point. Chid frowns on reflex when he saw the irritating face of his brother, but managed to keep his composure thanks to his training since young.

"Long time no see... Baltsar Oni sama."

"I heard the rumours, although the contents are idiotic... I heard there is an amazing freshman this year eh?"

Baltsar said suddenly. He is probably trying to find fault since he usually ignores what Chid says. Even though Chid hates that attitude, he doesn't complain. Baltsar is taller than Chid, and seems to be happy about something as he looks down on Chid and continues:

"After asking, didn't that freshmen have some familiar companions."

"Really? I have never heard about that..."

It's finally here, Chid brace himself. Baltsar was more imposing than usual, there is no way the conversation will become cheerful.

"Hey, is that the attitude you show your brother? Are you a brat that didn't learn manners?"

"...Sorry."

"Forget it. I am generous, and will forgive a brat without manners like you."

Baltsar squints his eyes and deepens his smile. A creepy smile like a predator hunting its prey. Chid works hard in hiding his wariness.

(The actual topic is coming, how should I get away from this...?)

"I heard you guys weaselled into the advanced class. That trash has grown so much, I will praise you honestly. Eh, although you are a bastard child, we are still family. It will be shameful to not do only this much... That's right, I said 'only this much'. Freshmen brats won't know much anything right? But I heard a rumour that made me concerned. How boring, if that was true..."

Baltsar squint his eyes further, Chid felt a sense of uneasiness went down his spine.

"I heard you guys made quite a scene? Hey, that's not true, is it?"

Baltsar's smile vanished without warning as he draws near menacingly; speaking in a low voice so no one can else can hear them:

"Don't you think you are acting out of line for a mere child of a mistress? Huh? A bastard child? The rumours are probably lies, I don't know what trickery you used, but wouldn't it mislead everyone."

"No, they did not misunderstand. Oni sama, we..."

"Enough, shut up."

The smile on Baltsar's mouth has turned into a frown. Seeing Baltsar getting emotional, Chid was tense and ready for anything. But unexpectedly, Baltsar says without emotions:

"Archid, what are you scheming?"

"What... scheming?"

"Casting middle spells easily after enrolment, planning a route to be a noble knight? Is that the extent of your ambition? Are you planning to bring that title to

'my house' as a visiting gift?"

Baltsar asked with his poker face.

"Nope, I told you before; we don't want to pester the main family. My ambition to be a knight is for my mother and our future livelihood."

"...Alright, as a gentle elder, I will believe my foolish brother."

"I am very... grateful."

Baltsar resumes his cold smile, pat Chid on the shoulder and left. Chid who was left alone sighs deeply.

(He didn't plan to do anything to me here, but he won't let us off so easily. If he is just picking on me, I can endure it. I hope he don't cause any stupid commotion.)

But the looming sense of trouble lingers within Chid, contrary to what he thought.

Chapter 4

This short chapter ends the school arc.

Spring of C.E. 1276.

It has been 2 years since Ernesti and the others enrolled in Laihiala pilot academy. Their lifestyle remained the same. First of all, Ernesti Echevarria...

"Alright, this year we will be working on 'Silhouette Knight Design and Application'... Ah, you are here..."

During this period when the school welcomes new students and a new academic year begins, the teacher who came into the classroom glance at the short student occupying the center seat of the front row. As a third year primary school student, Eru has gained fame for attending the craftsmen faculty's courses.

"The knighthood faculty's teacher have surrendered."

"Yes, I am happy to meet teachers who are so understanding."

He slightly tilt his heads and smile. He looks really cute, but with his background in bullying the teachers to accommodate his schedule, the scene is not warming at all. After promoting to the next academic grade, Eru uses his abilities to destroy the classes that got in his way of the courses he wants to attend. The knighthood teachers are depressed over this, the craftsmen faculty has given in. The teacher sigh deeply and focus on his lesson. If you ignore his shenanigans, Eru is a bright and passionate student, so the teachers gave him more leeway.

Next is the twins Archid and Adeltrud.

This is the training grounds of the knighthood faculty. Class is in session so there shouldn't be anyone here. The boy and girl in the field is Archid and Adeltrud, who have followed Eru's lead to go beyond the scope of the lessons and conduct personal training. For these 2 years, magic classes were used by them for special training. Eru is not here because he is attending some other class.

"Okay, I will be going all out next."

"What's up? Your hits are harder than usual."

Chid wave his hands at the suspicious Ady, gesturing that nothing is wrong as he tighten his grip on his weapon. His built was excellent for his age and his sword was one size bigger than the standard. Even though it is a wooden sword used for training, it was still imposing.

In contrast, Ady is holding two thin swords. Her battle style is similar to Eru, focusing more on agility.

Apart from that, their weapons has a strange attachment. Made from white mist tree, a gun staff based off normal magic staff... the latest 'Gandiva' model. Driven by his interest, Eru used his knowledge from his previous life to design the 'Winchester', but there is no need for the twins to use the same weapon. Their Gandiva looks more polished, evolving to the state where it can be attached to any swords. It was designed by Eru and made by their wonderful neighbor... Termonen workshop.

The two of them adopt a stance and face each other, activating their magic before raising their swords. They switch smoothly between sword and magic, displaying the power of their weapon which merges the sword with the staff... the ability of the gun staff. They are using limited physical boost. After Ernesti tweak with its script, the spell was easier to use than the previous version. More importantly, it improves the sustainability. They stay true to Eru's teaching, training their body and magic at the same time, efficiently improving their mana pool. The crystallization of their hard work is clear for all to see.

With the start of the battle training, Chid took a strong step forward. His strengthened muscles propel him ahead, putting his opponent into the his sword range. This Chid's preferred fighting style... practical usage of the length of his oversized sword. Thanks to Mathias's training, his style which places emphasis on the gauging of distance and skill is a real threat.

Ady uses the agility of her swords to counter this. Because of her limited physical boost, her slashes turns into a whirlwind bypassing Chid's sword, going straight for his body. Even though his weapon is large, Chid still manages to shorten the attack range of his sword to ward off Ady. But Ady didn't back down, shifting positions constantly as she waits for an opening. The fierce exchange makes other doubt whether this is really a mock battle? The two spar on until their mana and endurance are sapped.

Because these two learned magic from Eru who thought about things differently, this sort of training is normal for them. But simple things to them... using magic and swords simultaneously in training, are not taught in primary school. If a third party is around, she will probably doubt her common sense.

"Really... I can't stand you guys, what did Eru teach you..."

That's how Stefania who was watching felt.

"Hmm... it was magic and sword right?"

Watching the twins tilt their head and answer at the same time, Stefania can only smile bitterly. This is not a style you can learn just by 'learning magic'.

"With your standards, I am not sure if I can win."

"Really? To win against the top student of knighthood faculty who is also the student president can't be that easy?"

Stefania has reasons to be worried. Normal students will learn using magic and sword during battles in secondary school. If someone start doing so from primary school, how far can they grow? The answer is right before her.

She was the top in her faculty in results, daughter of a Marquis and with her excellent personality, she was elected as the student council president. But after seeing the capability of her siblings of a different mother, Stefania was still shocked. The twins were too used to Eru's standard, so their benchmark is different from normal people. Stefania thought about righting their mindset in order to avoid trouble in the future.

There are only the three of them in the training ground. They focus on training and distract themselves with chit chat, not paying attention to their surroundings. They didn't notice the shadow lurking behind the thin wall near the training grounds entrance.

While class is in session, the sound of footsteps echo in the empty dormitory, the students are away.

The person walking was agitated, his pace fast and he reached his desired room shortly, which is his room. He unlock the door with trembling hands and rush in as if he was chased. For a dormitory, this personal room was spacious. This was arranged by the school with safety considerations in mind. Aristocrats

staying in dorms will be assigned personal rooms.

The male student stood by the door listlessly for a while. He can't hold in his agitation anymore and kicked the furniture in the room, the sound reverberating loudly within the room.

"What is... that... how could it be... damn, damn damn!"

The male student... Baltsar Serrati cursed, feeling extremely frustrated. He is upset because he witness the training session of his sisters and siblings from a different mother.

Baltsar is a 1st year student in middle school of the knighthood faculty, and has just started using magic and sword at the same time. He was troubled by the difficult training, but his siblings were doing them with ease. It is clear their abilities are far ahead of him. For the proud Baltsar, he can't stand a bastard child being stronger than him. This thought fills him with rage, and he realize the existence of Chid and Ady are threats for his goal.

Baltsar's goal is related to his 'family'.

His family... The 'Marquis Serrati family', is one of notable aristocrats in Fremmevira kingdom. Their territory is not large, not it occupy a place that is flat and filled with farmland. It is situated to the east of the kingdom near to the Bocuse sea of forest and suffers frequent attacks by demon beasts. In order to fend them off, the marquis commands one of the top band of knights within the country... the 'Red Rhino Knights'. It is a critical place that borders the frontlines. As a result, this land prospered economically, with merchants passing through this main economic artery constantly.

Marquis Serrati ruling this land has 3 children. The eldest Artos is the heir of the marquis, receiving an education befitting a noble and is starting to help his father in managing the territory. The eldest daughter Stefania is studying in the 2nd year of middle school in Laihiala pilot academy, while the 2nd son Baltsar is in the 1st year.

"If this carries on... If that brat show up at the main family..."

The titles of nobility are basically inherited by the eldest son, the other children will not get any land or property. They need to forge their own path forward, most of them becoming knights or bureaucrats. Baltsar chose knight without hesitation since the Serrati marquis clan is in command of the famous Red

Rhino knights. In the Kingdom of knights, protecting the people from demon beast attacks is the noblesse oblige of the aristocrats, it is natural for him to set this as his goal.

"If those bastards comes into contacts with the Red Rhino Knights... maybe..."

The entire kingdom including the Serrati counties have no pretty vast amongst its knights. The knights are expected to be ready to fight the demon beast in a moment's notice, and is very demanding in terms of ability for those aspiring to be commanders. Being strong in combat skills doesn't guarantee the rights to be a leader of the knights, but the stronger someone is, the more respect they will garner in a military organization.

Baltsar imagines himself leading the order of knights with his brother. He has never doubted that future until the rise of the twins. This cast a shadow in his heart. Even though they are children of a mistress, their capabilities are strong and with ties to the marquis by bloodline, they might seize the advantage and realize their dream before Baltsar. His entitled position being stripped by his bastard younger siblings is a nightmare for Baltsar.

"That's right... I have to get rid of them."

He reflects on why he have let the situation deteriorate so much, and the conclusion is that he was too careless, and think of them as bastards who won't ever match him. Because of his foolish overconfidence, he ignored that incident during their first days at school. He realized he was wrong, the situation is pressing and every second counts. He have to work fast to dispose of them, but the twins are strong, it is unwise to challenge them head on. He need to suppress their strength, a safe and efficient way.

Baltsar raise his head, his worries all gone.

He is not a dumb. His willingness to sacrifice others allow him to come up with despicable and effective methods. The usual cold smile he wears widens, his ugly feelings was stronger than before.

One day after class, Batson Termonen walk along the corridor with heavy steps, preparing to head for the next classroom. He looked around and discovered a familiar figure. He noticed that person because she is a childhood friend.

"Is that Ady? Who is she... with?"

As he was wondering what Ady was doing that, Batson felt suspicious. not because Ady is not alone, but because she was with a student he didn't know. From far, her face looks stiff.

"Should I alert them?"

Batson was not being over reacting because Ady was with a stranger, but her expression looks weird which worries Batson. She might be in trouble, so Batson decides to express his spirit of consideration.

After making up his mind, Batson turned around and search for his petite friend who was probably in a classroom nearby.

"Baltsar Oni sama, what's wrong?"

Adeltrud clench her fist, her eyes searching around her, her slightly fierce demeanor was stronger now.

Baltsar stood before her with his usual smile. That is still bearable. Although it upsets people who looks at him, Ady has gotten used to it. The problem with the people around them. There are 3 of them behind Baltsar, 4 behind Ady. Male students she did not know blocks her way after Baltsar gives a signal, they are probably his lackeys.

Ady was stopped by Baltsar in the corridor, and brought to a deserted area. Although she is not close with Baltsar, they are still family and let down her guard. Ady thought she will be brought to a quiet place so others won't hear him picking on her. She was surrounded when she realize it. From the atmosphere and their unfriendly gaze, this is probably not a 'happy chat'.

"These are my friends. Nothing much, they are here to help me teach disobedient brats what are manners eh?"

Baltsar's companions smiles quietly.

"I learned about manners in class, there is no need to trouble everyone."

"The teacher is not enough to teach brats of a mistress. Your brother is teaching you personally, shouldn't you be lowering your head and beg for your lesson?"

A hand stuck out from behind Baltsar.

"That's right, be a good girl and..."

The nameless lackey was careless... he thought they have the overwhelming advantage with their numbers, and the target was a girl younger than them. Ady judge that there is no need to argue anymore, pulling out her gun staff before he finished. She straight away used limited physical boost and elbow the lackey in the stomach before he can react.

"You are noisy!"

She has to break through the encirclement to get away. She dropped one opponent and took the chance to run with her enhanced leg power. Because of her sudden retaliation, the encirclement was full of holes. Just as she was getting out...

"Spark Dart."

A arrow of lightning lands on Ady's back with this calm voice. She can't even scream, a hoarse sound escape from the her mouth as the air was pushed out of her lungs. It is not lethal, but the direct lightning hit numbs her body. Ady trips and fell.

(Uguu! I screwed up... can't, conscious... fading...)

Incredibly, she remembers the smug expression on Baltsar as she blacks out. He was not haughty like usual, but was wearing a foreboding smile.

Sometime after Ady blacked out.

Chid had no idea what happened, just a bit concerned that Ady didn't return when class begun. When he was thinking about ditching class to search for her, he met an unexpected guest.

"Oh? You were in class... that saved me the trouble."

Baltsar appeared before him. Chid was shocked, he maintained his distance from Baltsar during his time in the main family, and Baltsar has always chose inconspicuous places when talking to him. But they are conversing in a public place right now and Chid was unsure how to address him.

"Senpai, do you have anything for me?"

Chid can't hide his confusion and asked. Baltsar was smiling as usual as he announce in a loud voice:

"I challenge you to a duel!"

The rowdy classroom was silenced, followed by an eruption of noise. Students in the classroom chat excitedly with each other, discussing the topic 'duel!'.

"What are you saying..."

"You can't understand? Ha, I expected as much. I have been letting an eye sore like you off for too long, I can't forgive such insolence anymore. That's right, I have to set you straight."

Chid was baffled, Baltsar's action confounded him. Because everything has been set in motion without his knowledge. But he is sure of one thing.

"I don't get what you are thinking... Duel? Alright, it's on!"

He also hates Baltsar. His fighting spirit overcomes the query in his heart and he accepts readily. Chid will let it go if Baltsar picks on him verbally as usual. But if Baltsar issues a challenge head on, Chid has no intention of hiding his displeasure.

"How uncouth... your manners are lacking. Let's see how long you can stay arrogant."

Class was abandoned, the whole group tagged along with them out of the campus.

Laihiala pilot academy restricts fights between students, it is ridiculous for knights protecting the citizens to fight among themselves. Those who breaks the rules will face all sorts of punishment, the only exception is a fight known as 'duel'.

Duel's have its own set of rules: it needs to be one on one; the duel requires both party to agree... a 3rd party has to act as the referee... The referee has absolute authority; the match will be decided when one party loses conscious or gives up; they have to use wooden training swords, spells that release projectiles are banned to avoid collateral damage and others. In the end, the

main point is 'settle it yourself'.

By its nature, knighthood faculty have lots of hot headed students, settling disputes by duels are common, there is even a fixed place within the academy known as 'duel arena'.

News of Baltsar and Chid's duel spread through the academy instantly. They have been anticipating this and the challenge was issued prominently, resulting in a large crowd gathering to witness the battle.

A student who is not related to either of them volunteered to be a referee. He read out the rules of the duel in a loud voice, and confirm the acceptance by the two participants. When they face each other, Baltsar took out something from his shirt pocket. Chid turned stiff when he saw it.

(Isn't that... The hair pin Ady was wearing in the morning!? Why... Did he...!?)

The shocked Chid looks at Baltsar and their eyes met. Baltsar is smiling more intensely today, and Chid understands what he is his goal. Why Baltsar propose a duel and why it is done in public.

"You... What did you do to Ady..."

"Hmmm? I don't know what you mean."

Baltsar's expression is twisted as if he is trying to control his laughter, confirming Chid's suspicion.

"That's right, I heard a rumor the other day. You can use high spells as a primary school student, an amazing achievement! Can you show it to me?"

Chid make a spiteful groan. It is obvious why Baltsar raised this issue, he wants everyone present to hear that Chid saying he can't use it and shame him. The way he flashes the hair pin to made Baltsar's intention clear.

"... I can't use it anyway..."

Chid answered as if he is squeezing air out of his lungs, baffling the audience. Chid was one of the famous trio in primary school that was exempted from class by the teachers. The crowd was chattering, wondering why someone who is so far ahead in magic education saying something like this? Are the rumors false?

"Huh? What a joke! Ha! The gossips are fake? Really, to be exposed so easily! Where did that attitude of yours go? Hah!"

If eyes can kill, Chid would have murdered Baltsar with his gaze by now. Baltsar didn't mind and continued with a laugh:

"Hey hey hey, wanting to stand out even if you have to lie, what a naughty boy. Correcting the error of juniors is the senior's job right? Okay, it's about time to begin."

Baltsar lift his sword and staff while Chid quietly attach his Gandiva to his wooden sword. What follows is not a duel anymore, but an execution.

"What's with you? Such a spoilsport. You can't use magic and subpar with swordsmanship!?"

Baltsar taunts as they sparred. Chid was enraged and wanted to counter attack, but Baltsar flashes the hair pin from time to time to warn him.

About 30 minutes into the fight, everyone can see the battle is lopsided. Chid was slow and was the only one taking hits. He tried countering a few times, but his strength is lacking. The pitiful state of the rumored student disappoints the crowd. "Rumors are just rumors", "Where did the misunderstanding start". "The ending will be the arrogant junior facing reality", "Such a boring fight"... There are even some who left impatiently.

But some of the students felt uneasy. Chid was hit directly a lot of time, but he kept up his stance. He didn't take damage? Baltsar who is enjoying the overwhelming advantage notices it and took pleasure in tormenting Chid.

Since he can't defeat Baltsar, Chid has to tank the attack. He is not sure how long he can endure. Even so, he is still waiting for the chance to counter attack. He don't know whether if there is still a chance, but he cling on to this hope. Chid's most trustworthy friend is not here. He definitely know about this commotion after such a big uproar, and his absence means he is on the move.

(I leave it to you my friend... You are my only hope!)



Chid grit his teeth and took the hit from Baltsar with a staggering stance.

At the same time, Ernesti is walking quietly along the corridor. After listening to his childhood friend Batson's explanation, Eru is searching for Ady. But he is troubled as there are no clues. Suddenly, someone hugs him from behind. Eru was startled and looked up to see Stefania caressing his hair with a blissful face.

"Ah, so soft and smooth you wouldn't want to let go."

"...E, Stefania Senpai?"

"It's the fault of these silky smooth locks... you. impish. devil."

Stefania rubs her face with Eru's hair as she pokes Eru's cheek. Eru was baffled by her reaction as usual, but inspiration struck. Maybe Stefania has some clues.

"Stefania senpai, you came at just the right time. do you know where Ady is?"

Stefania who was all smiles became sullen and worried. He look at the confused Eru straight in the eye.

"I think Baltsar was meeting Ady."

"Balt... Your brother? He, Chid and Ady..."

Eru hesitated uncharacteristically. He had heard about Baltsar... and things about him. If Ady was taken by him, there is no telling what will happen. But Eru still hesitated, since this is a family affair after all. Eru can't judge how deep he can interfere, but Stefania blow all his worries away with one sentence.

"... Also, Balt brought lots of lackey with him."

"I don't like commenting on other family's affair, but that sounds ominous."

Eru's heart was not as calm as his tone. It is fine if it is in the realm of 'sibling fights'. But it is different if he brought a gang with him, which means Ady is in danger.

"I can't really ask you for help for this... but I hope you can look for Ady."

"... Will that be fine? Let me say this first, if he harms Ady, I won't forgive him even if he is your brother."

Eru's eyes are usually matured, but a dangerous gleam shines over them. Chid and Ady are his best friends in this world, if someone brought a group to harm them, he doesn't plan to hold back. Stefania watch him seethe in anger and droops her beautiful eye brows.

"... Please restrain from killing him."

"You are pretty cool about this."

"It's fine if Baltsar moved alone. Well, that's not really good... But I can stop him. But it's not the same this time, I can't overlook this as the student council president or his sister."

Stefania says softly as she tightens her hug slowly. Eru can't imagine her expression and simply ask:

"Can you tell me where have Ady been brought to?"

Laihiala pilot academy has a large campus and part of it are not in use. Ady and Baltsar's lackeys are in one of the empty classrooms.

The group sat Ady on a chair, tied her legs down and her hands behind her. It is about an hour since Ady was knocked out by Baltsar and she has not woke up yet. The 4 lackeys who surrounded her was arguing about something.

"Cheh! Little brat, she hit me!"

"Hey, she's still sleeping, calm down."

They left so many people to guard Ady who is unconscious to prevent her from making a scene when she wakes. The noisy boy was the one who took an elbow from Ady, who just regained consciousness.

"Why? She is out and tied down, there's no need to be afraid."

"Says the guy who got knocked down."

"Uguu! I was careless!"

He grabs Ady's hair and lift her head, clenching his fist with a violent smile.

"Look at this brat, getting cocky because I didn't go all out. She is going to get it now!"

The other lackeys thinks he was going too far. He didn't fall because he was holding back, he was knocked out in an instant because he was too careless. And if he punch her and Ady wakes up, things will get messy. Their goal is to restrain her for a short time, it will be better if she keeps sleeping. Just as another lackey was about to stop him...

"Hello... Anyone here.... Oh, there is."

At this moment, a shadow appears from the back of the classroom. The group naively think that no one will come, so their reaction is slower than the intruder. When they realize the situation, they saw a silver bullet shooting out from a weird magic staff towards their face.

The intruder... Ernesti knew his 'hunch was right' when he saw the lackeys, or rather Adeltrud who was tied to the chair. All that is left is to get rid of the enemy. He drew Winchester without hesitation and cast a wind middle spell to his left and right... Aero damned. The projectile hit the two at the back of the room directly and they were blasted away before they can scream. Eru didn't wait for them to land before activating physical boost to enhance agility and strike at the boy that is about to punch Ady. The boy panicked and attempts to block, but he can't match Eru whose speed has been enhanced. Eru cast a sonic boom with his staff while running, which blows the boy away.

Seeing 3 of his companions flying in an instant, the remaining lackey gave up understanding the situation. Regrettably, his opponent is not gentle enough to let this chance slip by. The lackey raise his staff unconsciously, but it was broken in half. The other Winchester swing back horizontally... That was the last thing he remembered.

After instantly knocking out the 4 lackeys like a whirlwind, Eru checked to make sure they are really down, then ran to Ady. He cut the ropes on her and check for injuries. Ady seems to be fine and her breathing is normal, so she is probably unconscious. Eru was relief after confirming that Ady was safe and proceed to tie up the lackeys who were knocked out. Fortunately they prepared ropes... although it was not meant to be used on themselves. After making sure they can't move, he look towards the direction of the arena.

"There might not be much time left."

From the commotion he saw on the way here, Eru can imagine the situation over there. Ady was kidnapped then Baltsar appeared before Chid, his actions are too easy to guess. That's why he was worried about Chid who was caught in the middle of all this. But he believe Chid will not give in so easily. Eru believe that if he hurries, he will be able to make it. That's why he wants to rush over immediately, but...

Eru looks at Ady down on the floor and felt troubled. Should he feel depressed? It will be a hassle to bring Ady over since she is taller than him. But he can't leave her here like this. Uguu, he groan and gave in, struggling to carry her in his arms. It is a challenge to keep his balance, but Eru uses magic he is proficient in to tide over it.

"I must make it in time..."

In order to reach Chid as soon as possible, Eru took long strides and ran.

In a place known as 'duel arena' within Laihiala pilot academy, 2 students have fought for over an hour. Although the battle was lopsided, it doesn't feel like it will end soon.

After sparring this long, Baltsar finally realize something was off. As he expected, Chid's movement was sluggish because of his scheme, and his strike has landed true countless times. Even though it was a wooden sword, normal people would still have incurred serious wounds that will put them out of the fight. Chid movement turned slower, but he shows no signs of taking serious damage. Chid might not be attacking because of the hostage, but his eyes are still strong. He is obviously waiting for his chance.

(Why can this brat take so much damage? Why is he still standing!? Is he going to buy time for Adeltrud to escape by herself? Adeltrud is very agile, but there is no way she can escape, could it be...)

Baltsar laughs. Chid didn't knew that Ady wasn't just tied up, she is under guard too. This means his plan is doomed right from the start.

Chid was startled when Baltsar stopped attacking. Baltsar laughter was unnatural, and he attempts to stomp out Chid's hope.

"Archid, are you stalling for time?"

"...!"

"I thought so. You think 'that' will come if you wait? I can only tell you it is all in vain, 'that' is tied up securely."

Baltsar can hear Chid grinding his teeth, it stirs a murky joy within him.

"Well, I'm growing tired of this. It's regrettable but let's end it, shall we?"

Baltsar flashes Ady's hairpin and lift his wooden sword. Chid tenses his face. To be honest, he is not in good shape, contrary to how he looks. Although he is using 'some method' to minimize damage, but it is still accumulating. It will be hard to gauge whether Chid can endure an all out attack. But Baltsar has been sending out a strong message, 'do not dodge'. Baltsar probably wants to finish this for real, his next strike will be at full power. Chid is not confident he can withstand this unscathed.

The two of them put in more strength into their stance than before. The spectators that are still around can feel that this will be the final attack and held their breath. As Baltsar was planning to launch his attack and charge in, someone intrude into the arena at the same time.

The figure leapt over the heads of the crowd and reach the front row. The arc of his jump is huge and he is moving fast despite carrying a girl in his arms. His footfall was silent as if he was stepping on a soft surface. The eyes of the audience naturally falls on this petite figure.

The figure is Eru who is carrying Ady. Baltsar cast a sideways glance over and made a twisted face when he realize who they are. Ady should be tied up, and he even posted guards. Did he overcome these obstacles and break Ady out? What are his guards doing? More importantly, who is this silver haired kid? Baltsar's head is full of questions, but no one is giving him answers.

Eru put Ady down. She has regained consciousness on their way here and stood up by herself. The first thing she did is glare at Baltsar, then she turned to Chid, sliding her thumb across her neck with a violent smile. Chid relaxes his body when he see Ady is safe and has the urge to smile. He nods and complains to Eru who is standing behind her:

"So slow."

"Sorry, there are too many rooms."

"That so. Nah, never mind."

Chid smile and raise his wooden sword. Nothing is holding him back, the time to counter attack is here.

Baltsar wants to scream. He knows that this is the worst case scenario. But when he thinks about it, the damage he inflicted on Chid remains, even though he lost the trump card of Ady as a hostage. He should take the chance and strike fast at full power. Baltsar put his thoughts into action and slashes at Chid.

But Chid displayed his outstanding agility. His sluggish movements earlier seems to be an act. He step forward lightly, parrying the attack and bumping Baltsar back with a shoulder tackle to keep their distant.

Chid has expended considerable amount of mana after dragging the fight so long. But he went through tough training under Eru since he was young and have enough gas left in the tank for a final attack.

"I will take back everything you owed me in one hit!"

Chid yelled loudly and activated physical boost he learned from Eru. A wild surge of energy flow through his body and he sprint forward with enough power to almost crack the floor. Before Baltsar can scramble and get up, Chid's sword have hit his stomach. The air in his lungs was pushed out and the hoarse sound 'hyaa' escape from Baltsar's mouth as he got launch into the air. Chid follow up with a series of air combo before he falls to the ground, Baltsar's body was twisted unnaturally. Before Baltsar's body lost speed and starts to tumble, Chid follows up with a roundhouse kick as a finishing move. Baltsar's body crumples into a ball and rolls away, before stopping in a heap several meters away.

The referee came to his senses after Chid took a deep breath and ran to Baltsar, finding him sprawl out like a piece of rag, his eyes white and foaming at the mouth. The result is obvious and the referee raise one hand and announced Chid's victory to the crowd.

The unexpected ending made the battle before looks like a lie. The audience can't keep up with the rapid development.

Although Chid was as formidable as rumored, far beyond the capabilities of

Baltsar. So why was he being overwhelmed for the past hour?

The spectators look at the young girl running towards Chid. They are not stupid, they can link the appearance of her with the sudden display of strength by Chid. The answer is obvious,

The eyes staring at Baltsar turn cold. For knighthood majors, although duels are a way to resolve disputes, the glory of the victor is sacred. If anyone defile the duel with despicable schemes, it will go against the way of the knight. The crowd are unsympathetic when Baltsar's lackeys carried him to the infirmary.

But Chid was badly injured, falling on his butt after letting out his victory cry.

"Chid! Hey Chid, are you okay?"

"I'm not doing so good, I took quite a beating."

"Your clothes are all tattered... Why didn't you dodge, stupid!"

"He kept waving that in front of me... I can't dodge even if I want to."

"...! Sorry, I was... too careless..."

Looking at Ady's tears and depressed face, Chid strokes her hair and said with a smile:

"Don't worry, this is all the fault of that idiot. And Eru, thanks, that was close."

"I'm glad I made it in time. But enough about this..."

Eru retrieved the hair pin from Baltsar without anyone noticing and hands it to Ady and said:

"You are all beat up, but seems like there are no serious injuries."

"Yeah, that guy attacks recklessly because I can't dodge, and was boasting about his skills."

Chid says sheepishly.

"I used physical boost and hard skin just before being hit to keep the damage down."

"I see. You managed to pull off a dangerous skill there."

"I can do it because I don't need to think about anything else... And it worked because he was so stupid. If he concentrate his attacks on my soft spots, I won't be able to hold out for so long."

"In other words, this guy lost because he was too cocky."

As Eru nods, the crowds starts to disperse.

"I will settle the loose ends. Ady, can you please take Chid to the infirmary?"

"I understand. Chid, can you stand?"

"I'm fine, my injuries are mostly bruises, just let me take it slow."

Eru sees the twins off, watching Chid staggering figure as he and Ady heads to the infirmary. Only Stefania is left in the arena.

"Is this okay? Your brother is badly injured."

"... He is, but his actions warrantees this punishment."

Stefania looks refreshed and shakes her head.

"That child... He resembles mother that way... About time he learns his lesson."

"It must be hard on you..."

Eru feels conflicted when he thinks about Chid and Ady's family troubles. But he shook his head and change his mood.

"Can I leave the clean up to you?"

"Okay, I have to explain to my family anyway."

Eru bows to Stefania who nods in agreement and left. In the end, some of the audience was interested in this commotion and discuss the relations between Chid and the Serrati family.

A few days after the duel.

The disgraced Baltsar was warned sternly by the school and his family, and he was grounded at home after some deliberation. To reform him, Baltsar was sent to the Red Rhino Knights for training, the place of his dreams. It's hard to say if this is a good or bad thing. But it is great for Eru and co who have one less issue to worry about.

One day after school has peacefully ended, Ady spotted Eru who was reading in the campus garden. His is a prominent person, but it is not easy to spot his petite figure. But his head of silver hair an easy landmark to spot when there are less people around. He sat under the shade of a tree, reading a thick book as usual. She don't even need to ask, it was a textbook on silhouette knights.

Ady walked to His side, but Eru didn't seem to notice. When he is engrossed in a book, Eru will be totally absorbed and not pay attention to his surroundings. Ady sat down beside him, staring at his profile intensely. His blue eyes with long lashes are gazing down at the book, his hair flows down along his face, shining brightly in the sun. His lips are tightly shut, reflecting his intense passion.

(Eru is cute as usual...)

Ady giggled 'hehe' happily and is preparing to pounce on him as usual but she was stopped by an image in her mind. The memories from the dueling incident.

When Eru rescued Ady who was kidnapped by Baltsar, he princess carried to the arena and to the middle of the crowd. She didn't pay any heed to this as her mind was filled with anger. When Ady thinks back, she discovered that it was a pretty embarrassing scene. Not just embarrassing, when she remember the joy of being rescued by Eru and how it feels in his arms, Ady blushes from just being next to Eru.

(Hya, I thought about that again...)

Ady was glad that Eru didn't notice her feelings. Her complicated feelings makes her hesitant on hugging Eru like before. Ady was unhappy with how she is acting and forcefully hugged Eru. Eru calmly greeted Ady who pounced on him suddenly and closed his book.

It might be strange, but Eru has been treated like a 'soft toy' by many others since young and is used to being hugged. And Ady was the one who started the 'hugging trend', so it was no surprise for Eru. But he noticed that Ady wasn't her

usual self and tilt his head.



Ady was troubled by her unexpected actions. Usually, she will stroke his hair while chatting with him. But when she hugged him this time, she can feel her heart drumming intensely, she can't do anything else. Ady buries her head into Eru's hair to hide her blushing expression from him.

(Wah... Why does it turn out this way! Oh no, I can't lift my head.)

Ady was too nervous and forgot that she can just let go. Eru was a bit surprised by her reaction, and decided to keep reading his book since she is not moving.

(It feels like I am an idiot, give me some reaction!)

In a way, this nonsensical anger calms her mind, Ady pokes Eru's cheek angrily.

"Hey, please don't poke someone else's cheek."

"...So cute!"

Ady regains her normal demeanor. Eru feels more comfortable to hug than usual, and she starts to caresses his head. The two of them didn't realize, but the few students in the garden was enjoying the sight of the pretty black hair girl and silver hair girl(?) playing around. That's how their daily life is, every day is peaceful.

Arc 2: Demon Beast Attack



Chapter 5

In the past, humans only ruled half of Zetterlund continent, with the eastern land beyond the Aubigne mountain range being uncharted grounds, dominated by demon beasts.

With the silhouette knights as their main forces, humanity pushed the demon beast back and ventured into the east beyond the Aubigne mountains. The humans was doing well in the beginning but their invasion grounded to a halt. The east of Aubigne is covered by the Bocuse sea of forest, with demon beasts that can take on hundreds of silhouette knights lurking inside. Suffering huge losses, retreated out of the forest.

There are vast plains of land at the foot of Aubigne mountain which is suitable for agricultural use after developing it. To protect this piece of land, they expand their territory to the edge of the forest and formed a country. This is the story behind the founding of Fremmevira kingdom. There are still demon beast wandering in the Bocuse forest, and might appear on a whim. To keep the demon beast away, walls are erected along the borders and fortresses are set up at the place where the demon beast shows up frequently... The entrance to the Bocuse forest known as the 'rabidly road' (demon beast highway). Castle walls are then erected between such fortresses. As it is physically impossible to cover the whole borders with siege walls, it cannot deter demon beast that approaches from places not covered by siege walls. The siege walls are effective against titanic demon beast, and thanks to the nation's defensive efforts, the kingdom remains relatively safe.

This happened during a certain quiet night.

Balguerie stronghold is one of the fortresses lying between the forest and the borders of Fremmevira Kingdom. It is quite far from 'rabidly road', even visits from mid size demon beast are rare, an outpost guarded by 10 silhouette knights.

That night, the guards on duty felt there is something wrong with the unusual silence in the Bocuse forest. The stars sparkles brightly in the night sky, there are usually a couple of howls from demon beast on a night like this. But it is unnaturally quiet tonight, they can't even feel the presence of the animals, as if they have all evacuated. Although it is unnatural, there are no indication of anything happening. Although they are baffled, they continued to do their

rounds.

The silence did not last long. They can hear the sounds of trees being crushed in the distance. It is obvious that something is approaching... Demon beasts. The guards raised the alarm without hesitation.

"What the hell, a demon beast so late at night!?"

"Here is far off from the rabidly road, what is it doing so far in the countryside?"

The knights in the fortress gets ready when the alarm horn sounded. The outpost was a hive of activity as they muster with haste. The sounds of trees being crushed all this while, the crisis is looming. The knight runners on duty jumped into their silhouette knights. The silhouette knights deployed at this fortress are the standard 'Cardatore' model of Fremmevira. The ether reactor was forcefully started from a dormant state, it's hum reverberates around it.

The silhouette knights checks through its start up procedures and equipment speedily and gathers at the gate of the fortress. At this time, the thing that have been crushing trees weird howls appears. The demon beast was like a small moving mountain, covered in uneven shell of rocks like a porcupine. A head and 4 limbs protrude from the sides, so the shape resembles a tortoise. Just that this tortoise is 80 meters long and 50 meters tall.

The guard on duty on the wall has only seen a 'emperor tortoise' in books... a type of demon beast known as 'behemoth'. It's features are its toughness and endurance. With its reputation of being a walking citadel, it is a difficult enemy to handle. To put it simply, the behemoth's biggest strength is 'strengthening'. It uses overwhelming mana output to maintain its strengthening spell, and support a physically impossible body structure. It also enables it to move with an agility contrary to its appearance, and hardening every part of its body from shell to skeleton, possessing incredible toughness. It is said that a behemoth mainly uses body slam to attack, and can shatter siege walls. It's 'heart' that is proportionally with its large body can generate mana equivalent to over 100 silhouette knights. With its endless endurance, the defense of the behemoth is almost impossible to break through. This is a behemoth, a fortress like demon beast with incredibly high defense.

"Demon beast identified... It is a 'emperor tortoise'...! A behemoth!"

Before the pilots can process the guards screaming report, behemoth slammed into the walls of the stronghold. It's intentions are unknown as the behemoth

attack the fortress from the front. Using its body weight and the toughness the behemoth took pride in, the demon beast turns in self into a battering ram. The siege wall and gate made of iron and stone was destroyed with one hit, the debris splatters all over. The mind of the pilots witnessing this scene turned blank.

After hearing the reports of the guard and the destruction to the stronghold, the pilot's faces show shock and awe. Who would have known that a battalion level demon beast will show up at a place so far away from rabidly road? A battalion level demon beast requires a battalion of silhouette knights (about 300) to defeat it. But there is only a squad (9) of silhouette knights stationed at this outpost, 10 silhouette knights if you include the captain. This is enough to keep duel level demon beast (equal to 1 silhouette knight in power), but is overwhelmingly under strength to challenge a battalion level demon beast.

It will be suicidal to take a stand against the demon beast, but the knight runners did not waver. They do not know why the behemoth is heading into The kingdom of Fremmevira, but if they allow it to push through without warning headquarters, the results will be disastrous. It is impossible to stop behemoth with the forces stationed at stronghold Balguerie. But if they stall for time, they might find the weak spot of the beast. They made their resolve and charged at it bravely.

With the walls breached, the behemoth break down the remnants of the gate and walks into the stronghold. It's howl shakes the fortress like an explosion.

The squad of Cardatores moved with this cue, pointing their silhouette arms, 'culverin', at the behemoth. The knights channels their mana into the spear shaped weapon, the emblem graph converts it into a physical phenomenon. Magic scripts and mana beyond the capability of humans to process are activated, forming overed spells. Flames erupt from the tips of the spear and score direct hit on the beast with an explosive sound, burning it with a pillar of fire. Normal beasts would have fallen under this attack, but the behemoth live up to its name of a moving fortress and is totally unfazed by the strike. But this is within the expectations of the Cardatores, and they continue the onslaught of flames with their culverins, covering the beast in smoke and fire.

The power of the silhouette arms are strong, but the expenditure of mana is very intensive. All the Cardatores kept up the attack until their mana reserves are depleted. To replenish their mana pool, they power their ether reactor to absorb ether from the air. The reactor moans louder as it works even harder.

The entrance of the stronghold was blazing in a sea of fire after the continuous

assault by the silhouette knights. The cracking flames and smoke shrouded the behemoth completely and the knights loses track of the beast. There are merely 10 silhouette knights, but even a battalion level beast should sustain some injury under their all out attack. Just when the pilots are thinking about that, a howl made the earth shudder, the shock wave disperse the flames and behemoth appears from behind the smoke. Reality betrays their expectation, the behemoth's gigantic body is unscathed.

Behemoth rush towards the squads of Cardatores with a momentum that doesn't match its size, the speed is so fast the Cardatore could not evade it in time. The silhouette knights was down after receiving a solid blow. The steel plates cave in an instant and the limbs are squashed. The sparkling crystals shards flew out from the gaps between the armor. There is no way the knight runner will survive.

The other Cardatore fell back, keeping a distance from the beast. The behemoth attack with a deceptively quick pace, knocking away the Cardatore who can only fire off a flame bullet in futile resistance.

The remaining Silhouette knights judged that their magic attacks are ineffective and surrounds the behemoth, attacking with swords. But just as the rumors says, the shell covering the behemoth is unbelievably hard, negating all the slashing attacks. With its whole body is covered by the shell, the behemoth is still able to move with amazing speed. Just 10 silhouette knights won't be able to buy time, and is in danger of being wiped out by the behemoth. The surviving pilots felt an unspeakable terror run down their spine, this is indeed a battalion level demon beast. The captain of the silhouette knights made a snap decision.

"Arlo, Benjamin, Claes! Are you still alive?"

"...Yes sir!"

Behemoth goes on a rampage again, slamming its body into the fortress with the force that it used to charged at the Cardatores. The stone made stronghold is falling apart, it can't last much longer.

"Arlo evacuate all the people who are still alive and run to Carriere fortress! Benjamin alert all the neighboring city the behemoth might go to, and rush to Jantunen! Claes, make for the capital! Run at top speed, run till you grind the crystal tissue to dust, you must report this to the capital!"

The captain turns the head of his machine and look at his remaining

subordinates.

"The rest of you... Sorry, you drew the short straw."

The 3 pilots belongs to the younger generation, the reason behind their nominations are unknown, but they have no authority to refuse or hesitate. The top priority is to stay alive and deliver the warnings, there is no time for them to bid farewell. A tinge of sadness flash across their face, but they regain their spirit through determination and their sense of duty.

"Go!"

"Yes sir!"

The young pilots left the front lines on their cardatore without hesitation. After the captain confirm the situation through his holo monitor, the corner of lips rises in a smile.

"My brothers, we will be knock away if we stay in this cramp space! We are abandoning the stronghold, going outside and use stalling tactics!"

"Hey hey, we won't let you come into our kingdom!"

"Let's show this damn tortoise what we are made of!"

The 5 Cardatores escape from the stronghold, preparing to fight the behemoth. This is a hopeless battle, but their movements are clean and crisp. The behemoth raze the stronghold to the ground and start its attack again. The Cardatores used a series of coordinated attacks to impede its advance. But the range magic attack cast at random couldn't stop the movement of the giant beast. They will need to use melee attacks eventually, striking the head and legs before running away. The hit and run tactics is repeated again and again. The Cardatore can only focus on dodging the enraged behemoth as they fought on.

But even silhouette knights have a limit to their energy.

Silhouette knights are equipped with ether reactor a semi automatic part that supplies mana by absorbing the ether in the atmosphere. But the supply rate is limited. Especially in battle, if the usage rate is higher than the supply rate, the mana reserves in the machine will get gradually smaller. The pilot is only human... both man and machine have their limits. With the depletion of the mana reserves, the sluggish Cardatore are sent flying. The loss of focus due to

fatigue cause the Cardatore to miss the chance to evade and get smashed by a tail attack. One by one, the knights falls to the demon beast.

But the 5 silhouette knights managed to buy a few hours of time that are more precious than gold while facing off a battalion level demon beast, it is only right to see this as the victory of their iron will.

The one who held on to the very end is the veteran captain. The machine is full of countless scratches, the right hand was blown away by the swipe of the behemoth's tail. The crystal tissue are in tatters due to damage as well as wear and tear, the mana reserves are on its last legs, he can't even run away.

"... The rookies have escaped... This fucking turtle, next up won't be a half ass group like us, but a standard order of knights. Prepare to be history."

Since he can't escape, the captain commands the damaged machine to run. He never thought he will survive, injecting his remaining mana into his command Silhouette knight and charge at the behemoth recklessly. But the best it can do is stagger forward in awkward steps. He tightens the grip of the sword in the left arm and throw the whole weight of the machine in a stab at the face of the behemoth.

Maybe the demon beast knows the concept of respect.

Behemoth lock on to the last enemy blocking its path, opens its mouth and took a deep breath. This is a never seen before attack. After a beat, just before the sword of the command silhouette knight reach the behemoth, a tornado breath powered by magic spew from the behemoth's mouth. The fierce wind uproots the trees. The command silhouette knight took a direct hit and was blown far away, the crystal shards and pieces of armor rains over the forest.

Behemoth growl. The squad launch many attacks in their stalling tactic, and with the command silhouette knight's last blow, a faint crack was left on the behemoth's face, lightly scratching the eye ball. If the damage of the command silhouette knight wasn't so severe, it might have hit the eye ball. Behemoth surveys the areas for a while, and starts advancing after making sure those in its way are gone. Its footfall is heavy and its eyes bears no sign of emotion.

The largest demon beast calamity since the founding of Fremmevira started quietly. What is its goal? The answer lies in the road the demon beast is heading down, the largest city of central Fremmevira... Jantunen.

Chapter 6

== CE 1277.

The 12 year old Ernesti Echevarria and his childhood friends, the twins Archid Olter and Adeltrud Olter has moved on to middle school of knighthood faculty. Their other childhood playmate, the dwarf Batson Termonen, remained in the crafting faculty. Due to the influence of Eru, Batson has shown interest in the career of knightsmith. The two of them can sometimes be seen together, talking about Silhouette Knights design and operation knowledge.

As for Ernesti, he has been taking classes about Silhouette Knights but unrelated to knighthood ever since he enrolled in Laihiala pilot academy. Eru has completed all the courses in the crafting faculty after attending their classes for 3 years. After satisfying his thirst for knowledge with them, he is now unofficially attending pilot faculty classes.

Since Laihiala is a 'pilot' academy, piloting faculty is the star of the institute. Only the best graduates from knighthood middle school may gain entry into piloting faculty. Although it is known generally as the piloting faculty, but not everyone enrolled here has knighthood background. The knight runner alone won't be able to move the Silhouette knight, it is still a machine that requires crews to maintain and service it.

The pilots will learn about control and maneuver; the craftsman learns to construct and maintain the outer skin as well as the inner skeleton; the alchemist trains in the art of crystal tissue creation and repair; the sigilmancers focus on the preparation of the silhouette arms. The various faculties in middle school are collectively known as pilot faculty in high school.

With this background, the education policy of the pilot academy trends towards practical application. They familiarize themselves with the skills and techniques by piloting the Silhouette Knights owned by the academy. Laihiala pilot academy possesses 20 Silhouette Knights, a number that is more than adequate to man a fortified outpost on the front lines. But they are the retired models Salodrea machines that are 2nd rated in abilities.

These Silhouette knights have been repaired countless times over the long years and each of them are used by several piloting candidates for training. The repeated usage has worn down the machine and it requires frequent maintenance checks, a heavy burden on the students, but also great experience

for real world application. Organization hiring piloting faculty alumni comments that the fresh graduates have the ability to work on the frontlines immediately.

On the training ground of Laihiala pilot academy, a mock battle between Silhouette Knights is ongoing.

In the middle of the building made from stone, a red machine is engaged in battle with a white machine. They have blunt sword used for training spar n their hands, battling fiercely. The machine provided by the school has reinforced armour around the pilot seats, a design which focus on the safety of the pilots. But a Silhouette Knight going all out is still very dangerous, so the equipment is nerfed to restrict its damage. Standard equipment is only used in practical training battles against demon beast.

There are no empty seats on the wall surrounding the arena; all sorts of people are watching the duelling Silhouette Knights from the spectating seats. Training with only brawls is not real training; the analysis of the fight is indispensable. There are people recording the battle logs, studying the skills of the pilots... some are allocating maintenance spare parts as the damage piles on; some of them are observing the effects of the magic arsenal.

Most of the people present are high school students, but there is a small figure that is out of place here. Not only is the person short, he also has a cute face that is easily mistaken for a girl. That person is Ernesti. Because his stature is small, he is occupying the front seat so his vision won't be obscured by others, staring at the Silhouette Knights intensely.

He skipped the knighthood faculty classes he is supposed to attend, overcoming all obstacles to earn the right to be exempted. He is unorthodox in his actions, but is strangely law abiding in some areas.

In the beginning, Eru uses his cute appearance and mascot like feel to gain entry. He was planning to watch quietly from the side, but he is now observing the battles and repairs up close, finding more places he can chip in. From the way he can easily keep up with the conversations of his seniors, his preparation in the last 3 years did not go to waste.

Getting practical first hand experience and knowledge outside the classroom made Eru extremely happy. Apart from greedily taking part in all sorts of work processes, he is very interested in the training battles. The Silhouette knights -- giant robots fighting before his eyes draws out indescribable emotions within him. The giant machines that emulate a knight in armour bash at each other with

iron limbs wielding mammoth swords, even shooting powerful projectile spells. Eru observes the training battles with passionate eyes, not missing any single movement.

Side tracking a bit, there was a rumor that a guy was almost pulled into a twisted world after seeing the pretty boy who can be mistaken for a girl blushing while watching the Silhouette Knights with longing eyes.

"Eh, seems like Di will lose again."

Piloting faculty student... Helvi Öberg mumbles as she records the battle logs, a breeze blowing across the arena messes her short and curly hair.

The situation of the battle before them is clear, the red knight is struggling. It dual wielding blades and on the offensive, but it didn't break through the white knight's defense.

"Hmm, what do you think about this battle, Eru?"

Helvi who has been glancing at the data in her hands asked Eru who was sitting obediently besides her. Their vision remains fixed on the arena at all times.

"The speed of Güell's sword is slower than before. I think that is the reason he missed the opportunity to score points off attacks."

"... I see. Now that you mentioned it, his attacks seem too casual. I thought the condition of the knight runner is not too good. What went wrong?"

"The movement of the right arm seems sluggish. I think it is because the joints or crystal tissues have been replaced."

Helvi browses through the documents in her hand and confirms the maintenance report of the red machine named Güell. The record states: due to signs of stress and fatigue in the crystal tissues of the right arm, it has been replaced this morning. The movement probably seems rigid because the parts are not aligned. She found the reason behind the sluggish actions of Güell, but she can't tell that the condition of the right arm is bad. Helvi moans Eru's passion and attention to detail when watching training battles is better than those actively engaged in it. She found it amazing and wonders where his passion stems from. The white machine fighting Güell in the arena, Earl Cumber, fended off the attack and stab at the Güell's chest. The horn sounded, signalling the end of the battle. The instructor judged that the spar has been won

by Earl Cumber. Güell can't overcome its bad condition in this battle.

The machine that was battling just now enters the workshop situated near the arena and the pilots exited the Silhouette Knights.

The pilot of the white Earl Cumber was Edgar C Blanche, a tall and dignified man. Similar to his appearance, he is matured and steadfast, an elite among the pilots.

The red Güell is manned by Dietrich Cunitz. Unlike Edgar, he has long blonde hair, a meek and skinny man. His abilities are top notch, but he tends to get nervous and loses his head easily over small issues, his performance is inconsistent. He seems frustrated because he lost the match.

He started squabbling with the maintenance crew the moment he got off the machine. Instead of discussing the issue, they are pushing the blame of the loss around; even the bystanders know they won't make any headway. Helvi can't stand it and butts in. She explained her findings about the arms to settle this meaningless quarrel. But Dietrich's expression lit up mid-way and smiles sarcastically. In contrast, the maintenance crew looks annoyed.

"Oh, no wonder the movement is so rigid. Maintenance is skimping on the repairs."

Dietrich is suggesting 'losing is not my fault'. Edgar standing nearby advises him sternly:

"Di, that's going too far. If the arm is not functioning well, you should adopt a different style in your fight. Its fine if you lose after trying that out, but your movement seems unfocused today. It is not right to blame it all on the maintenance crew."

Dietrich's sarcastic smile disappears after being lectured in front of everyone.

"You only won because my machine's performance is sub par, don't get cocky."

"The content of the spar is more important than winning; I am just saying that you should reflect on that."

"Is that so? Why don't you operate a faulty machine in our fight next time?"



Dietrich left in angry strides after uttering these words with a sour face. The people in the work shop have gotten used to this and simply shrug. Eru who was watching from the side-lines made a perplexed face and Helvi pat his head for some reason. The school bell rang, announcing the end of class and to start preparing for the next lesson. Eru was unhappy that the fun time is over, but still bowed to Helvi and rush backed to the knighthood faculty.

"Field trip?"

Eru have no idea what his classmates in middle school is talking about, there seems to be some events. He must have missed something if the whole class is talking about it. Probably because he is spending so much time in pilot school.

"I'm sorry, I have no idea. Can you tell me what this is about?"

Eru said with a troubled expression. His classmates look at each other for an instant, and all of them started explaining at the same time. Maybe they enjoy talking to Eru, or they felt excited when speaking with Eru. It requires tremendous patience to summarize the jumbled contents, but it can be filtered down to these main points:

- In order to accumulate practical experience in fighting demon beast, all 3 grade year of knighthood middle school will be participating in a field trip.
- The destination will be the region of Jantunen, the forested hill home to small demon beast.
- The first years will be focusing on the basics of camping and wilderness survival skills.
- For safety, pilot school will be sending several Silhouette Knights as escorts.

"I see, it will be conducted 2 weeks from now."

"Hey, did you only found out about it today?"

"That's what I thought. You keep going~~ to high school right? You didn't come~~ back much anyway."

Eru tilt his head perplex. Chid seems shocked, but Ady looks unhappy. Eru has been reporting to piloting faculty during class and after class, the time he spent training with Chid and Ady have been dwindling.

"Ady? Are you in a bad mood?"

"Not~~ really. Totally not. You are mistaken right?"

But the way Ady is crossing her arms and her strong tone seems to be announcing 'I am very unhappy'.

"I don't think I did anything wrong. What did I do?"

"That's right~~ you didn't do anything. You are not here most of the time anyway~~"

This is what a hopeless situation means. Eru have no idea what to do and request Chid for aid with his gaze. Chid seems to acknowledge that and changed the topic forcefully.

"We will split into teams for the field trip. Eru, which group are you joining?"

"Ah, about this..."

Eru glance at Ady who can't hide her curiosity and said:

"If there are no special arrangements, I would prefer forming a group with the 3 of us. From the sound of it, the first years will be concentrating on the basics, so grouping up casually should be fine."

"Oh-- we will be staying together then..."

Ady's mood has obviously turned better. She went behind Eru and put her arms around his neck in a hug like usual.

(No matter how old I am, I don't get women...)

Including the memories from his past life, Eru looks at Ady with his wealth of life experience and felt a chill. About 2 weeks later, Ernesti and the others prepares to go on their field trip under the clear blue skies.

Large communal horse drawn carriages are parked in front of Laihiala pilot academy. The middle school students load onto the carriages under the direction of the instructors.

"Take care of yourself--"

Batson from craftsman faculty is not participating in the field trip. The knighthood trio walks towards the carriage after Batson bid them farewell in a nonchalant tone.

"Eru Eru, this way!"

"Don't rush; the carriage won't leave without us."

The destination of the field trip is a place called 'Cloquet's Forest'. That place is covered in forest and is slightly elevated, filled with demon beasts that are relatively weak. Carriages are used for the long trip after considering the power level of the demon beast. Cloquet's forest is a suitable place that meets the requirement of the field trip. According to the planned route, they will swing by Jantunen for resupply before heading into Cloquet's forest which is nearby.

After all the students are seated, the carriages set off one by one. The long caravan of carriages advance steadily on the road.

The 10 Silhouette Knight escorts are spread out along the convoy. They are piloted by the high schoolers from the academy. The dark red and pure white machine, Güell and Earl Cumber are here too.

The Silhouette Knights used by the academy are donated from the military. After the long years of maintenance by the students with free reign, their shape has become unique and interesting. Some have meaningless and complicated patterns engraved on its armour, others have eerily big accessories added onto its head, and there are armours that are pieced together in a weird pattern. The machines have been customized deeply, giving a 'that's too exaggerated' kind of feeling. The exoskeleton comes in all sorts of colours, having an elegant air about it instead of being fierce and mean.

There are many knighthood majors participating in the field trip. Although middle school is full of kids, they are still candidates striving to be knights, so there shouldn't be any problem if they meet normal demon beast attacks. Even if this is a field trip, they can't be spooked by small demon beasts. Within the Kingdom of Fremmevira, mid-sized demon beast about a dozen meters still lurks in the forest and mountain regions, and they might run into them on the road. The Silhouette Knights are the insurance against unexpected attacks.

"I thought we will have a chance to fight demon beasts, but it turns out to be a

boring trip."

Dietrich Cunitz who is riding in Güell complains loudly. Although they are here as a safeguard, there have been no major incidence on this road for the past several years. Although the knight runners have been assigned the mission of 'long distance manoeuvre training', this is a trip that has nothing to do with tension or motivation.

"Hey, I know how you feel Di, but you can't say such things."

Helvi Öberg who is piloting the Silhouette Knight 'Trandorches' instead of working as a battle logger reminds him. There are microphones inside the pilot seat, the sound inside will be broadcast loudly through external speakers if it is not turned off. It is amplified to ensure the message is not drowned out by the noise of the Silhouette Knights in operation, so it is possible that a middle schooler have heard him.

"Both of you take this seriously. Even if nothing happens, this is still part of the training."

Earl Cumber caught up to Güell and Trandorches, the voice of Edgar C Blanche can be heard booming from the Silhouette Knight.

"As expected from the top pilot, such high end content."

"Di, didn't you hear what I said?"

"Ah -- keep it down you two, everyone can hear you."

Güell and Earl Cumber fell silent after hearing Helvi and returned to their positions. Helvi felt uneasy about the days ahead while she pilots Trandorches.

They are not the only one who doesn't know how to kill time.

"I know it can't be help, but this is too boring."

After rocking in the carriage for about half a day, Chid is bored out of his mind. Not only Chid, the students around him are feeling the same. They are 4 days away from the destination, and with their transportation taken care of by the carriage, the students on board have lots of free time. They can talk freely, but they are growing tired of the cramp space on the carriage, which can't be help.

"Do you want to look at the scenery outside? The scenery outside is interesting."

"No, the only one who is satisfied watching the scenery is you. And you are really tenacious, how long do you plan to watch that?"

Chid looks at Eru with tired eyes. Eru stops gazing at the scenery and turn back, sitting properly on his seat. He looks really cute with his head slightly tilted and deep in thought, relieving the atmosphere instantly.

"Want to read the books I brought along? I think you can kill some time this way."

"Books... I want to stretch my body. Eh, never mind. What have you got?"

"Theories on Alchemy, volume 1."

"Is that a textbook? Isn't it better to sleep then read that?"

"You are right, but there is really nothing to do here. Why not follow Ady and take a nap?"

Ady is sleeping soundly in front of Chid. Her peaceful face that has nothing to do with boredom made Chid looks to the sky. He maintained that position and suddenly thought of something.

"Eh, it's a great way to kill time right?"

They climb onto the top of the carriage. The top is full of luggage of the students. Unlike the inside of the carriage, there are no seats here, but there is no problems sitting down.

"The scenery here is better."

The carriage advanced leisurely under the clear blue skies, the top of the carriage feels nice and peaceful. A breeze made Eru's silver hair sways. He found a nice seat among the luggage and entered scenery appreciation mode.

"Ah-- this is still boring. But it is nicer than the cramp inner carriage."

Since there is nothing to do, napping under the sky sounds interesting. Chid doesn't care anymore.

"Ah, so you guys are here."

Ady pokes her head out from within the carriage.

"You woke up?"

"Yeah, you guys are gone when I got up."

Ady made her way to Eru's side as she speaks, and lay on his thigh, getting in position to sleep.

"The sun is so warm, it feels better sleeping here."

"Sleeping is fine, but why are you using my lap as your pillow?"

"It's feels nicer this way."

As Eru was at a loss, Ady has begun her journey into dream land. Eru can't do anything about her and started reading, looking out at the scenery occasionally. Chid ponders about stuff for a while, but thinks it's too bothersome and gave up, using a luggage as a pillow to nap.

Their leisurely journey continues at this pace. After rocking for 3 days on the horse drawn carriage, the group from Laihiala pilot academy finally arrives at the largest city of central Fremmevira -- Jantunen.

There is a reason why Jantunen ranks amongst the top cities in the kingdom. It lies along the route that leads to the west of Fremmevira and beyond the Aubigne mountain range. It is also the transit point for supplies leading to the frontline fortress to the east of Fremmevira. As an important transport hub, its defences are second only to the capital, surrounded by siege walls and moats. On top of that, there is a large band of knights equivalent to a company (100 Silhouette Knights) garrisoned here. No matter how crucial this city is, this is too much military forces for one city. But they are stationed here because of Jantunen's strategic location, allowing them to reinforce front line cities quickly. And in practice, about 30 percent of the forces will receive patrol and escort missions outside the city.

By the time the convoy from Laihiala pilot academy arrived at Jantunen, it is already past noon.

The city wall surrounding Jantunen is colossal in scale. Because of the existence of demon beast, traveling long distance is difficult, so this is first time seeing another big city other than Laihiala for many of the students. Everyone is curious about this city and this is the most anticipated part for many of them.

"What an amazing wall, what are they defending against?"

"The enemy they have in mind is demon beast... or rather, the demon beast during the nation's founding. There are many more vicious demon beasts during that era."

"Oh... That's why it is so massive."

The students were elated when they saw the gate leading into the city. But the carriage did not pass through the gates, but are gathered in the open space in front of it.

"Wait, aren't we going into Jantunen?"

"They already told us that the stop at Jantunen is only to resupply."

Although the group can disembark and rest outside the carriage, but they will need to move out once the goods have been loaded. The students who thought they can get a reprieve from the dull journey start to complain, the twins stare at the gargantuan gate and nags.

"Man, this is boring. It won't do any harm letting us in for a while!"

"That's right, I want to go shopping."

"Wait, that's not why..."

"Don't you want to take a look?"

"I am interested, but going on a tour with such a large group of students can turn into a horrible mess."

As they spoke, Eru looks to the side. It was probably arranged before time, the merchants came out of the gate with the goods which are then loaded up the carriage.

The short break was over and it was time to go. The carriage left with the

reluctant students on board and move towards their destination -- Cloquet's Forest.

After traveling for a day from Jantunen, They reached Cloquet's forest. The road that leads to the east of the kingdom was badly maintained. After rocking in the carriage for the whole day, they finally reach the entrance of a thick forest.

The caravan parked in an open space near the entrance of the forest, the base camp for annual field trips.

The students started setting up tents under the command of the instructors. They have been sleeping on the carriage on their journey here, ready to escape in a moment's notice if demon beast attacks. But they will be training for several days here and can't stay on the carriage indefinitely. So they erected tents and used this base as a camp site.

The seniors experienced this several times and set up their tents skilfully. In the knighthood faculty, besides normal training, camping trips are also conducted once in a while. Since they aspire to be knights, setting up camp is a necessary skill when traveling in an army. Learning skills other than sword and magic is a unique feature of those majoring in knighthood. But it is not easy for the first years. Although they learned and practised before the trip, their inexperience still shows in their work. Even with the assistance of the instructors, there are a few teams that slowed down progress, so dinner was served very late.

The entrance of the forest was filled with tents just like a camping zone. There are torches all around, illuminating the dark corner of the forest. As part of their training programme, the 2nd years are assigned guard and patrol duties. With so many charges, the instructors can't take care of everyone, so the students are also posted as guards, which serve as practical assignments too.

Eru's team set up tent faster than the other groups. Eru knows the steps well, and with the tall twins helping, they finished in no time. The two of them helped the other groups after finishing while Eru walks to the outer edge of the camp site.

(The basics are all done; I am not being lazy... ah, found it.)

Besides the camping grounds of the middle school are the base of the high school knight runners and their Silhouette Knights. The footsteps of the Silhouette Knights and the hum of their internal components will disrupt the

sleep of the campers. That's why they are stationed here in case of any emergencies.

The 10 Silhouette Knights are arranged in rows, in standby mode with one knee on the ground. Their colossal figures are partially illuminated by the camp fire. With some parts hidden in the darkness, they look more imposing in the night. Normal people might feel intimidation, but Eru simply smile as he looks at the rows of iron giants seated in a row.

(Ah, giant robots are great-- this is the oasis of the heart, every home should have one.)

There are no such terrifying families even in this world. But regretfully, no one is around to retort Eru.

"Hey, you there... silver hair? Is that Ernesti?"

After a short moment, someone called out to Eru who was immersed in a mysterious healing aura of robots. He turns back and saw the owner of Earl Cumber -- Edgar.

"Evening Edgar senpai. Sorry to disturb."

"So it is you. Why are... I guess it is pointless to ask."

Eru is famous in pilot school; his antics and motivation are well known too.

"Is senpai on standby duty?"

Edgar heard Eru's query as the flickering light from the camp fire shines over them. He smile bitterly and shakes his head.

"No, we were deciding the order of the duty but... sigh, Dee is making a scene as usual."

"Dietrich senpai?"

"Yes. Simply put, he was complaining about standby duty being a hassle. As knight runners in their senior year of Laihiala academy, protecting our juniors is an important mission... But as usual, his attitude is flippant."

He still has to carry out his task no matter how stubborn he is. But Dietrich still

insists on nagging about it.

"I don't want to hear his complains, so I decided to change the mood and see these guys."

The two of them raise their head to look at 'them'. The campfire lit up the giant knight in white armour -- Silhouette Knight Earl Cumber. It was not customized and retained its original shape. Its simple design has no special features and has a gentle feel about it. With the top pilot Edgar controlling it, the two partners are known as the strongest in pilot school.



"Senpai like Silhouette Knights too?"

"Eh? Rather than like... they are my weapons and comrades. My mood will calm down when I am with them. When I feel frustrated like just now or when I feel tired, I will visit them."

I am probably not suited for this sort of talks -- Edgar scratches his head.

"I think having a reliable companion is wonderful."

"You really like Silhouette Knights. That's right, if you continue to work hard as a knight, you will gain a partner too... Ah, we chatted for too long, 1st years should get back before it gets too late."

And so, they bid their farewell and return.

"...Okay, Dee should have calmed down by now."

After watching the bright silver disappear into the darkness, Edgar mumbles to himself and prepares to head back with the spirit of heading into battle.

The sky is totally dark; the 1st years finish their late dinner in the dim lights and returned to their tents. The 1st years have no assignments for the night. After the long journey and setting up camp, fatigue sets in and they wrap themselves in their blankets and sleeps. When they have gone into slumber--

A loud howl from a beast came from deep within the forest. It was probably wolves. After the first howl, howls in response can be heard from all over the forest. The students on guard duty heighten their senses and looks towards the forest. The howls can be heard every now and then, so they lost interest in it after a while. But there are some who can't ignore the howls. It reminds the 1st timer the situation they are in. This is not a safe town or a carriage they can run away on. This is right in front of the forest where demon beast lurks; they are sleeping in a tent that is erected here.

Even though Cloquet's forest is not really dangerous, it is not considered safe even with the students on watch. After arriving here without incident, they felt the atmosphere was light along the way here, but grew tense because of that howl. Their sleepiness because of fatigue is gone and they are wide awake.

In Eru's team tent, Chid is shaking his head while lying down. Although he is not very affected, Chid still felt a bit uneasy and can't sleep.

(I thought I was braver than this, seems like I am quite tense too.)

The dim camp fire shines in, giving the dark tent an unsettling atmosphere. Chid suddenly wondered if Eru sleeping besides him was uneasy like him and called out softly:

"Hey Eru, I want to ask... Eh."

Eru is fast asleep. Eru was not totally unmoved, but he was a warrior on the front line of hell in his previous life too. He understands the importance of rest even if he doesn't want too, and gained the ability to be able to sleep under any circumstances.

(... Although I have known from the beginning, but he is too strong and carefree.)

After hearing Chid, Ady who can't sleep turns and stare at Eru's sleeping face.

"Eh, how cunning."

Chid doesn't know what she means by cunning. Ady shifted over and pulls Eru into her arms, hugging him like a pillow. Eru woke after being hugged this way. He realizes it is Ady, pats her head and falls asleep. Maybe Ady felt safe because of this and her breathing turns smooth after a moment. Looking at the two of them, Chid felt foolish for not being able to sleep.

(Isn't it stupid for me to be tense alone?)

That's it, he decided to not worry anymore. After a while, he enters dream land.

The next morning, the students start getting up sometime after dawn.

A lot of student didn't get enough sleep. In the sleepy atmosphere, Eru's group was refreshed. There are always students who can't sleep when camping; experiencing this tension is one of the objectives of this field trip. The instructors didn't push the weaker 1st years, so their job content is rather relaxed. After the students finished the simple breakfast made from preserved food, they gathered by their grade year under the commands of the teachers.

After the teacher gave brief instructions, the 2nd years break into teams and head for the depth of the forest. The prime objective of this field trip is to engage in practical battle with the demon beast lurking in the forest, and to hunt for a certain number of them. The 1st years will head to the outer region of the forest, and may have to fight if necessary.

The 1st years were tense as they enter the forest for the first time, while the higher grades bear a different sort of tension as they head into the forest. After a moment, the sound of their armour grows softer as they move further in and the forest turns quiet once again.

And so, this long day that all students in the knighthood faculty will never forget begins.

Chapter 7

A physical phenomenon forms out of thin air with a screech and fly towards the 'Staccato Lizard'. The spell 'Aero Ripper' slices through the Staccato Lizard's neck, killing it before it can scream.

"A lizard is heading this way! Vanguard, ready your shields!"

The group follows the clear command of the lady, students lightly equipped with wands and bows retreat to the rear, replaced by students in heavy armor. They form a row and form a wall with their shield to fend off the 'swarming demon beasts'. The beasts that survived the onslaught of magic and arrows pounce on the student in the front row with a fierce collision. The students used their shield to repel the claws and fangs of the demon beast and counter attack with their swords, taking down a large number of beasts.

But the demon beast use their superior numbers to bypass the iron wall defense and to their back. The lightly armored students standing by behind the vanguards will attack when they see any beast slip past the defenses. No demon beast make it through this formation.

The middle school students who split into groups when they enters Cloquet's forest has now gathered and formed into a single unit, positioning themselves into a formation that focus on defense. The surge of demon beast charge at them from the depth of the forest. The students took on the waves of demon beast courageously.

They put down one demon beast after another, but the torrent of demon beast is just one the tip of the iceberg. Some beast slips through the defenses from the edge of the formation and file towards the forest entrance.

"If this goes on, the 1st year at the forest entrance will be attacked...! We have to warn them!"

The female student in command realized the danger and wants to warn the group behind them, but they have another impending crisis.

"Watch out! A Macehead Ogre is coming at us!"

The student who saw the Ogre screams. They were warding off small sized enemies like Staccato Lizard and Saber cats, which is manageable despite their troubling numbers. But Macehead Ogre is a different ball game. Similar to its name, Macehead Ogre is a 3m tall giant ape with a head full of short and thick horns. <TL: Kanji ==> needle head ape>. It requires the team work of several students to fight on par with one of them. They can't take on this enemy while engaging the horde of small demon beasts.

"...! 2nd file! aim for the ape's leg! It will be bad if they draw near!"

Several staff sticks out from the student acting as the defense wall, casting all sorts of spells. They used fire, wind and lightning magic to battle the demon beasts.

We need to turn back time a few hours to understand why the situation is so dire.

Morning, the middle school students from higher grade years head into Cloquet's forest in teams with high spirits. They kept their guard up, advancing deep into the forest with no resistance and realize that something was wrong. normally, they would have met with several demon beast attack this deep into the forest, but there have been nothing so far. There was no news of the demon beast disappearing from Cloquet's forest.

The groups hesitantly loiter around the forest, attempting to reach other teams for news. But all the groups reports the absence of demon beast encounters, with no sign of cats or lizards. Finding no trace of the things that should be there is a abnormal sign, so the crowd decides to report back to the teachers after a short discussion.

As they were preparing to leave, the demon beast starts to emerge from left and right. It is a bit of a hassle, but they still raise their arms to destroy the demon beasts.

1, 2-- 5-- 10--

When the demon beast number in the dozens, the expression on everyone changes. Seeing the state the forest is in, they understands that this is another abnormal event, differing from the one they experienced just now.

But thankfully they were all gathered so they have strength in numbers, a silver

lining of this gloomy situation. With their years of experience in knighthood combat training, the students formed ranks with a formation made for large groups. This is the result of the students who aspire to join a band of knights, displaying the fruits of their hard work. And thus, their group clashes head on with the swarm of demon beast and brings us to the present moment.

This is the 10th Macehead Ogre they have defeated.

The tactic of prioritizing range attack is working. They judge that staying put will wear them down, so they retreated towards the forest entrance slowly.

It was fortunate that the student council president Stefania Serrati is present. When they split into team activities, she assigned task and suitable equipment to each group. It was the same for their combined formation, everyone has their role to play. Although they are a pick up group, things are going well. The problem is the lack of a commander. It is great just following their given task, but if they don't act when there is an opportunity, they will miss the chance to take advantage of a situation and waste their resources.

Under these circumstances, no one objects when the student council president who is in her senior year step up as the commander. She has the nominal title as well as the grades and was trusted by everyone. Even if this is a pick up group cobbled together on a whim, her instructions was clear and led the group through difficult situation very well. Their retreat was orderly and casualties was low, but--

(... This is bad. The number of demon beast is a problem, but why are they so adamant about charging us... How much longer can we hold them?)

Stefania appears calm when she commands, but she was frantic inside. They still have lots of stamina and mana, but they will be overwhelmed if this keeps up.

(We didn't intercept all the demon beast, I hope the children behind us are safe...!)

The situation is deteriorating, but they still fought on.

The 1st year training at the outer edge of the forest was attacked while the higher grade years student was battling.

In the beginning the students near to the forest screams. several Staccato lizards pounce on the students and bit them. Their attack are not fatal, but it is dangerous if a bunch of them strikes together. The instructors rescued them immediately, attacking the demon beast that was targeting the students.

From the end result, the instructors' action made the situation worse, but they are not at fault. It will be fine if it was just a few demon beast, but the demon beasts start to emerge en masse. The teachers missed the chance to fall back and have to keep fighting. They are holding up well, but the students behind them fell into a panic with the emergence of more demon beasts. The instructors who are supposed to maintain order can't draw back and give the students the proper instructions.

The students recklessly wave their staff and cast spells. The blindly cast magic did not threaten the beasts, almost hitting allies instead. Some drew their swords without thinking about others that are near them, causing further panic. Compared to the higher grade students who was prepared and equipped for battle, and has plenty of practical experience, the 1st year was not ready for a fight.

"...Aero Damned, Canister shot!"

Suddenly, someone leap over the panicking 1st years students. Silver hairs shine brightly under the sun, this image burns deeply into the eyes of the confused students. That person flip in mid air, aimed for the ground and shot out several air bullets. Canister shot meant casting several spells at the same time like a shotgun.

The air bullet hits the ground with the sound of explosion. The compressed air bullet squeezes the face of the beasts together before blasting the demon beasts and the ground away.

The merciless magic destroyed a large amount of demon beast through carpet bombing. Two more students moves in from the left and right. One of them charge into the demon beast crowd with a big bastard sword in hand. He uses physical boost to swing his giant sword, slicing the demon beasts in half. He uses the momentum to turn his body, drawing another weapon from his waist and point it at the surviving beast.

"Too naive! Sonic boom!"

This weapon-- gun staff Gandiva produce a vacuum from its tip, forming a air

current rushing towards the demon beasts, hitting those that were outside sword range. Their body twist unnaturally and was blown away.

A girl showed up beside him, holding two bayonet staff pointed at different beasts.

"Riot Sparrow!"

Lightning fell, accompanied by the sound of thunder the next second, hitting the gathered demon beast. She didn't even look at the beast that is spasming in death, attaching the gun staff onto the sword in her sheath. She holds the compound swords in both hands, slashing at every demon beast that came within range. Even a thin sword can cut demon beasts in half if it is strengthened by magic.

The 3 students attacked like a storm, reducing the number of beast drastically. The pressure from the approaching swarm lessens, giving everyone a chance to catch their breath. The students stopped moving not because of the chaos, but from the shock of seeing the one sided massacre.

"Draw your staff."

The short student who leapt over the crowd stood in front of them and issued an order. The young tender voice that sounds as pleasant as a bird has an air of authority in it, making everyone follow his instructions.

"Everyone gather up, form into tight ranks. Teacher!"

The dumbfounded instructors finally came to their senses.

"Please take command and keep the initiative. Please retreat, the 3 of us will support the others."

The teachers starts giving out instructions in a hurry. The students form a tight formation and strengthen their defenses. For 1st year students with inferior combat abilities to fight demon beast, they will need to concentrate their firepower. Although it is still a bit flimsy, but the teacher commanding them can handle it.

Ernesti stares at the demon beast rushing out of the forest and slowly raises his Winchester. Chid and Ady stood beside him like his guards. Chid lean the bastard sword on his shoulder with one hand and grabs a Gandiva with the

other; Ady rest the tip of her dual sword in her hands on the ground. Their eyes are full of determination when they see the swarm of demon beast before them.

"Hey, isn't these numbers a bit too much. Oh well, we can wreck havoc if more of them comes!"

"Hmmp-- I won't hold back!"

Eru reign in the spirited twins.

"It's fine if the both of you want to fight, but don't forget about the rest of the student body."

"Eh--? They can take care of themselves... probably..."

Ady wants to protest, but stopped midway. Because Eru is staring at her with a stern face.

"You don't need to stay here if you just want to wreck havoc."

"Uguu, I... I get it! I will help them!"

Chid raise his hands in surrender.

"Fortunately, this is still the entrance of the forest, we can get back to the campsite if we retreat. If we link up with the Silhouette Knights there, things will lighten up. Before that..."

Eru cast a Aero Damned as he speaks. The demon beast that wanted to attack while they were talking was sent flying.

"We need to protect them."

Eru made up his mind, lift Winchester and shot out a string of spells.

While the middle schoolers is in the forest, the high school knight runners were relieved from their duty and starts their training. Since they cannot increase the stress on the machines since the Silhouette Knights have to be conserved for escort duties, so their training centered on man to man spars.

Edgar is in the midst of sword swinging practice when noises that shouldn't appear from the forest.

"Hey, isn't the forest rather noisy?"

"Hmm?"

The moment he brought it up, the students around him perk up their ears. Sounds of tremors that wasn't here before came from the direction of the forest, and they knew what it was.

"That sound of explosion... magic!?"

"Something is up... Exercise cut! Pilots prepare to sortie. The situation in the forest seems to be bad, scout it out!"

The group in the camp moved hurriedly. The knightsmiths working on the Silhouette Knights withdraw to let the pilots mount on. They skipped the initialization check and let the machine stand up, drowning the surrounding with the sound of the churning ether reactor. But they can't send all the machines out, so 5 Silhouette Knights were dispatched into the forest.

"Hey, look at that..."

The scale of the crisis was beyond their imagination. Swarms of demon beast was charging at them before they enter the forest, the numbers was more than they have ever seen. The beasts shrieks as they charge in all directions.

"What... What is happening?"

"The demon beast are going out of control? Are the brats in trouble!?"

They drew their swords and advance into the forest. They linked up with the first years in no time. The 1st years has successfully retreated with Eru's quick thinking.

The 1st years bundles together, retreating slowly as they cast magic to restrict the demon beasts' movements. The beast that rushes at the formation will be repelled by magic. Edgar move in to support them, piloting Earl Cumber as a shield in front of them. The tense first years breathe a sigh of relief when they saw the Silhouette Knights appears and dispose of the demon beasts. The strongest combat unit of humanity -- the Silhouette Knights are trusted by the populace. Especially at the scene of a demon beasts raid, their power to match a hundred demon beast provides a great sense of security.

They retreated to the campsite, setting up fences around the area to fortify their defenses.

With the Silhouette Knights taking charge of defense, the instructors and the high school knight runners begin to discuss their plan of action. There are enough defense to protect the 1st years, so that isn't an issue. Their main worry lies with the higher year students who delved deep into the forest.

"Do you know the routes taken by the 2nd and 3rd years?"

"That is hard to say. Because this was meant to be a practical session, the area of operation is the whole forest, and there is no guarantee they will stay in the assigned location."

The instructors reviewed the action plan of each higher year student and groans with a serious expression. They want to rescue them, but with the limited number of Silhouette Knights, they won't know where to start. Cloquet's forest was vast, running around like a headless chicken will be counter intuitive. But they don't have time to hesitate too. At this point, Ernesti stick his head out from the instructor's side.

"Where are the places in the forest that can gather people easily?"

"Hmm? That... if they want to rendezvous, it should be nearby."

The teacher was surprised by Eru's sudden question, but still answered him. It is meaningless for a 1st year to discuss this with them, but with his spectacular performance earlier, no one felt out of place with Eru's intrusion.

"With the scale of the demon beast horde, won't the seniors group up to resist? That's why I think we should look for places where large group of people can gather."

"Hmm... You have a point."

"The Silhouette Knights can't move smoothly in heavily forested areas. Taking our combat assets into consideration, we should start our search from open spaces, right?"

The map sprawled out on the table was marked with red lines showing the route of advancement. To reach the designated areas, they have to cut through the

center of the forest.

"Also, you can take out the demon beast coming this way if you use this route. If anyone is caught in a battle, just holler and you will be fine."

Because this is an emergency, everyone accepts Eru's proposal and form a team to rescue the higher year students. The campsite needs guards, so only half of the machines are deployed -- 5 Silhouette Knights.

Edgar who is the pilot of the pure white Silhouette Knight -- Earl Cumber was the first to volunteer. As he was entering Earl Cumber, someone call out to him. Edgar turns back and see Eru standing there.

"Can I go too?"

"Why?"

"The family of my friends are also in the forest. They are worried, so I want to join the search if possible."

Edgar felt troubled. Although it is dangerous, it shouldn't be a problem with Eru's combat skills. And with the rational thinking he displayed during the conference, it will be helpful to bring him along. Edgar agrees after thinking about it.

Earl Cumber lets Eru stand in his hand and stood up. Behind him is Helvi in Trandorches and 3 other machines. They enters the forest with heavy steps.

"Those who have depleted your mana help the wounded! Front row switch with standby row! Hold the line, everyone just hold on a little longer!"

Their mana is exhausted and they are panting hard. They try to stabilize their breathing as they continue to defeat the unending torrent of demon beasts. The higher year students protects their wounded as they continue to retreat from the forest.

It has been several hours since the battle begun, their retreat has been difficult. They are fine with handling the beast one at a time, but when a huge wave swells up and attack, they are forced to deplete their stamina. The Macehead Ogre that shows up from time to time drains their mana. Because they can't cast powerful enough spells because of the lack of mana, a Macehead Ogre managed to close in on them and cause serious damage. About half of the

group is in the state of mana depletion or have been wounded, their forces are dwindling. They conserve their remaining stamina and keep switching the vanguard to hold the up the battle front. But they don't know how much longer they can last; they are close to the camp site, which is the only hope that keeps them going.

But reality is cruel.

Two Macehead Ogre appeared dead ahead -- They are so agitated that they are foaming at the mouth, charging straight at the group. Compared to the beginning, the magic at their disposal is much lower in grade, so the students can't stop them. The vanguards frown. The sole Macehead Ogre that attacked earlier over a dozen students, inflicting heavy casualty. If they take on two at the same time, they might be wiped out.

Stefania who is in command knows this very well. On top of giving out command, she has moved to the front line with her staff in hand. She has gone through all sorts of possibility while fighting, but they don't have the combat prowess to break away from the encirclement. The group is reaching their limit of their physical and mana reserves. They can't muster the strength to defeat the Ogres even if they wanted to.

The Macehead Ogre has an endurance that matches its tough appearance. They advance steadily, making light of the desperate struggles of the students. The chaotic attacks serve to agitate them instead, making them more excitable.

"This is it..."

Someone mumbled this softly. The Macehead Ogre who is right before them raise their fist, aiming for the head of a vanguard. The vanguard raised their shields, even though it is in vain.

That's why he didn't understand what happen when he hears the sound of a dull explosion over his head.

He didn't see several Piercing Lances flying over his head with incredible accuracy, hitting the arm of the Macehead Ogre dead on. He also missed seeing the piercing lance exploding one by one in accordance to its script, blowing the Ogre's arm away. By the time the vanguard composed himself, the Ogre was running away yelping.

Following immediately is something that is beyond his imagination -- the one

which came flying wasn't just the magic projectile, but the caster himself -- Ernesti, who rush in like a silver bullet. This is a literal description, as Eru is conjuring 'Aero Thrust' to accelerate as he leaps, just like a bullet. He uses the momentum to catch up with the limping Ogre that lost its arm, slashing off its head with a Sonic Blade. The head flew into the air and the massive body collapse.

Eru lands with enough force to dig into the ground, turning his head as he slides and points his Winchester at the other Macehead Ogre. Fireball was rapidly cast from its tip, engulfing the Ogre the explosion that shakes the ground. Half of the Ogre's body was charred and falls.

"Now... Now's the chance! Kill it!"

Stefania was stunned by Eru's sudden intrusion into the battlefield, but she didn't let the chance slip away. Her command made the students move, finishing off the Ogre.

"... Eru..."

"Sorry for the wait, Student Council President. I brought reliable reinforcements."

Without needing Eru to show her, she can hear heavy footfalls behind. The rescue team overtakes the higher year students, spreading out in front and protecting them.

The 10m high giant knights swings its gigantic iron sword, easily wiping out a wave of demon beast, this is the overwhelming strength of humanity's strongest weapon. The students erupted in cheers on the sight of the powerful Silhouette Knights. There are no reinforcements more reassuring for the group on the verge of defeat. They are safe.

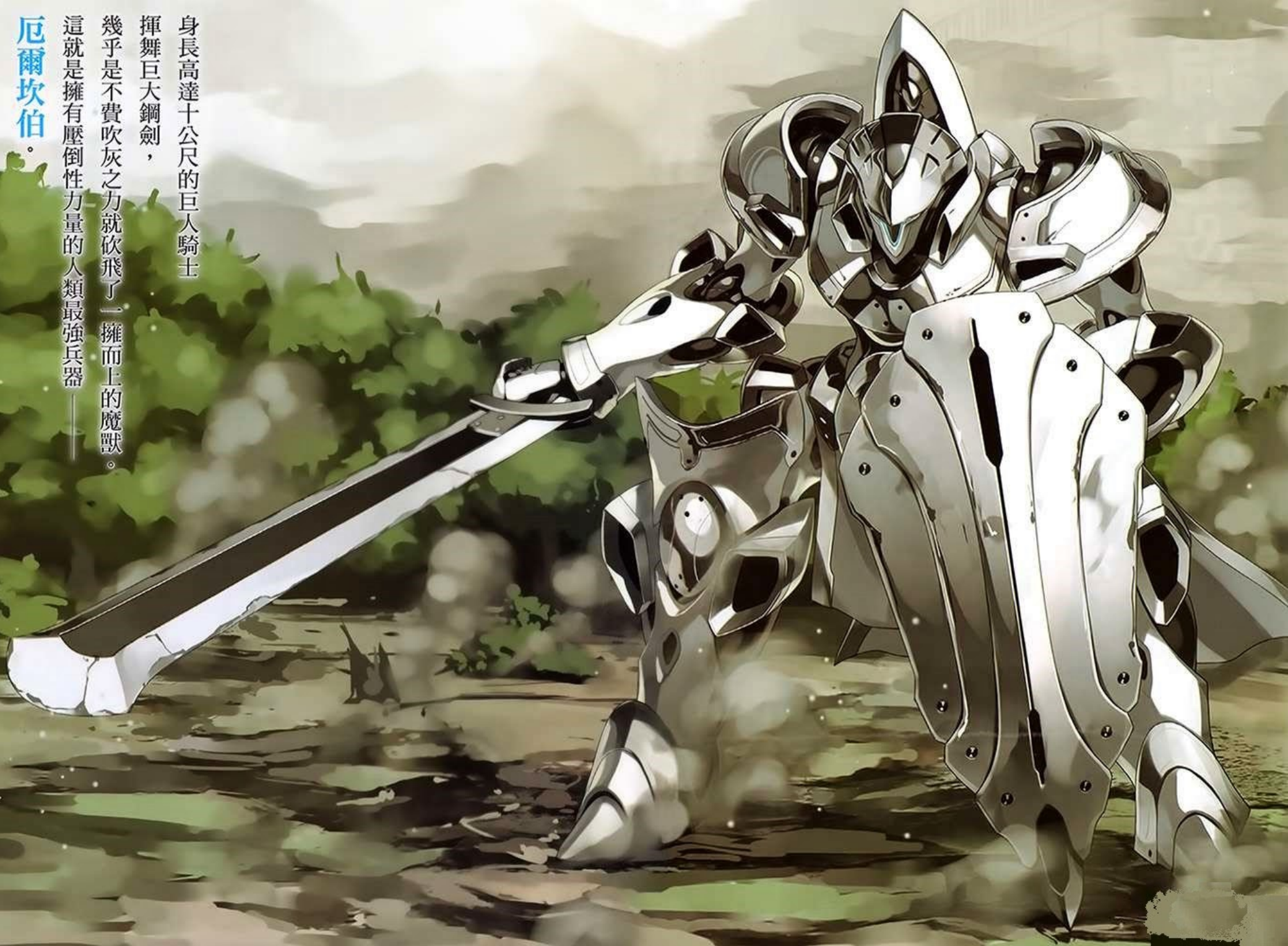
身長高達十公尺的巨人騎士

揮舞巨大鋼劍，

幾乎是不費吹灰之力就砍飛了一擁而上的魔獸。

這就是擁有壓倒性力量的人類最強兵器——

厄爾坎伯。



"... Well well, bringing Ernesti along was the right choice."

Edgar who is riding inside Earl Cumber mumbles to himself as he drives the demon beast off.

They followed Eru's suggestion and search places with wide open spaces. They discovered the higher year students shortly after advancing in that direction. This is because the students are bunched together and ready to retreat. But they are in a crisis when Edgar found them, the Macehead Ogres was about to break through the formation. They can take down the demon beast easily with the Silhouette Knight's power, but they are too far away. They will also hit the students if they use Silhouette arms.

Frustrated with his inability to help despite having the strength to do so, Edgar grind his teeth with regret. At this moment, Ernesti who is in the hand of Earl Cumber charged ahead. The Ogres fell easily before the rampaging Eru, making Edgar sigh. His performance is shameful when compared to Eru.

With the Silhouette Knights who made it in the nick of time as escorts, the students continue to retreat. There are many injuries, but no one was lost and everybody made it back to the camp site in one piece.

This happened slightly after the Laihiala pilot Academy student body left Jantunen for Cloquet's forest.

A Silhouette Knight passed by the convoy and arrive at the eastern gate of Jantunen. This is probably urgent as the exhausted knight runner approach the knight after reaching the gate. The knights was stunned by the sudden turn of events, but their face turned pale after receiving the report of the pilot and hastily inform their commander.

"Is... this true!?"

Commander of Jantunen garrison knights -- Philip Hallhagen's expression changed after hearing the report from his subordinate. The vice commander Gottfried Hyvärinen who was also in the commander's office was expressionless, but his face is white. This shows the impact this report gave them.

"Yes sir! Stronghold Balguerie was decimated under the attack of the battalion level demon beast -- Land Emperor. It is likely the defending team has been wiped out. Behemoth is moving west into the heart of the kingdom, and is expected to show up around Jantunen soon. Sir!"

Battalion level demon beast's sudden attack makes Philip's head ache like a nightmare. But the commander has no time to waste. It is fortunate a knight runner brought this news to him, giving him some buffer time to prepare for the Behemoth to appear. Every second is precious.

"Issue emergency orders, muster all the knights near Jantunen! This order overrides any mission they are currently undertaking!"

The orderly repeats his given orders, salute and sprint out immediately. Philips and Gottfried dash out as if they were chasing after him and head towards the war council room.

"A behemoth... Even Jantunen doesn't have battalion, only the capital can match that."

"The categorization is only a guideline. Even with our forces, we can take it down if we are prepared for major losses."

Philips clenches his fist as he moves hurriedly.

"I know, but the problem is the scale of the losses! It's meaningless to blindly sacrifice the hundred Silhouette Knights in our garrison! Jantunen will be left defenseless!"

Gottfried was quiet after hearing this. He do not wish to risk the destruction of their band of knights, but behemoth has already ravaged a stronghold. If Jantunen suffers heavy collateral damage, the trade routes of the kingdom will be heavily congested. If the supply to the frontlines are cut off, it will adversely affect the fortresses, leading to more catastrophe. This could determine the fate of the entire nation, they have to kill behemoth even if it takes the lives of the entire knight company. Gottfried has to offer his consul if necessary, that is his duty as the vice commander.

"...No, there is no time to discuss this. If we don't stop it here, the entire kingdom might fall. Send an envoy to the capital, they will need to send a replacement company of knights after we fall..."

Seeing Philip face twist with worry, Gottfried can only nod in silence.

All the knights on duty is already there when Philip enter the war council room. All of them wears anxious faces because of the impending crisis.

The knights outside the city receives recall order, so they have to assess the situation before all the knights return. A map was prepared, and the possible advancement route of behemoth was highlighted. The knight runner who sent the warning doesn't know the current position of behemoth either, so they have to use factors such as terrain and the mobility of behemoth to predict its advancement route and estimate its rough position. They will also need to decide where they will fight the behemoth.

"From the direction it is heading and the terrain around stronghold Barkley, the most possible route is around d'Aiguebelle mountain, through the forest at the foot of the mountain."

"That is right beside Jantunen... its current estimated position?"

The knight who was asked pointed to the map.

"I think it has pass through Crepel plains and about to enter Cloquet's forest."

"Cloquet's forest... Uguu, that's nearer than I thought. If we are going to intercept, we will need to do it somewhere nearer to Jantunen..."

A knight behind him suddenly shouts.

"Did you say Cloquet's forest...!?"

"What? What is wrong with Cloquet's forest?"

No one wants to listen to bad news, but they need to keep tabs on elements that could affect them. Before the watchful eyes of everyone, the knight announce with a pale face:

"... Laihiala academy is conducting a field trip there right now!"

"Wha...!?"

All the knights present are speechless. Not only Jantunen, even citizens who are the assets of the nation, as well as the children are in danger. There are

knights in the room who have relative studying in Laihiala knighthood school right now. Some of the knights approached Philip frantically.

"We need to go to Cloquet's forest!"

"We have to save the children!"

Philip was troubled with the piling troubles, but he did not consider it too long. Another mission takes priority.

"...Send out messengers, but the company will stay put until we have gathered enough forces."

"Commander! Are you forsaking them!?"

"Nonsense!"

Philip roar at the knights who are pestering him, his voice filled with anguish.

"I want to help them too, but with our current forces, we will need to give everything to take down behemoth!... I am not optimistic about the coming battle. Striking now without mustering the whole company will just be wasting our numbers, we might even be wiped out by behemoth. Don't be mistaken! Our objective is to defeat behemoth, defend Jantunen and safeguard the entire Fremmevira kingdom!"

The rowdy knights quiet down. They also understand they have no say in this.

"... What we can do now is to have faith in their luck and wits..."

They looked into the darkness in the direction of Cloquet's forest.

The entrance of Cloquet's forest, Laihiala Knighthood school camp site.

After the upper years student in middle school retreated successfully, a simple fence was erected alongside the Silhouette Knights, forming a simple line of defense.

Most demon beast emerging from the forest is about 1m in height, the largest being 3m tall. Their combat capability is insignificant compared to the 10m tall Silhouette Knights. They swats away clusters of beast with a single sword

swing. But there are a few that sneak past because of the large difference in size. They swarm towards the fence, and are held off by the students who move in to fill the gap.

From the demon beast's view point, the Silhouette Knight who seems to be flaunting its existence is intimidating. Unwilling to face them, the beasts flank the Silhouette Knights, attacking the base camp from either side. The middle schoolers in the higher years suffered many casualties, so this is a favorable situation for the knighthood students who are lacking in manpower.

After the sun sets beyond the mountains, the attack came to an end. The students who are alert even with the absence of enemies instinctively felt that the battle was over and takes a breather.

"Is the demon beast stampede over?..."

Stefania Serrati who felt fatigue from the depth of her heart was relieved. She was leading the able bodied student body to the very end. They met up with the teachers back at the base camp, but they judged that it will be easier for Stefania who has been commanding from the very beginning to carry on. But part of it was because her sense of responsibility.

"Chid, Ady... Eru."

With the situation calming down, she greets the resting students and survey the camp site. She call out to the familiar faces loudly when she came across them.

"Ah, Onee sama... are you okay? I heard the student body was in trouble!"

Stefania shakes her head.

"As you can see, I am doing well. Enough about me, you guys were reckless out there."

Stefania's looks amazed as she spoke. The students who just retreated back to camp were riddled with wounds and fatigue, so their combat capabilities were minimal. They will struggle to handle the demon beast that sneak pass the Silhouette Knights in this state. But thanks to Eru buying them for them, they managed to recover and make it through.

"We were the only ones who can still fight, so we went a little overboard."

"I think the 3 of you were as effective as a platoon, this is not going 'a little overboard'... Hai, never mind. More importantly... Eru!"

Stefania approach Eru who was standing behind the two of them and hugs him. She didn't care Eru who was surprised and couldn't resist, rubbing her face on that silky smooth head of hair.

"Ah~~ this healing♪~~ I can keep fighting if Eru is here."

(Stefania Senpai... Can't be helped. I will give her some service for her hard work. If my sacrifice can improve her mood, it is nothing.)

Stefania happily play his hair and poke his cheeks, but Eru did not resist, allowing her to toy with him. Ady seems angry but didn't stop her.

Stefania enjoyed herself with the cuddling for a long while. Suddenly an awkward voice call her from behind.

"Eh... Student Council President..."

The student is looking for her, but was surprised with how creepy Stefania is smiling. This is expected as Stefania was leading the student body coolly earlier, but is now hugging a junior with a lewd smile.

"What is it?"

"The teacher is asking for you to discuss our next move."

"I understand. Sorry you three. Let's chat later, it will just take a little while."

It is too late to cover up, but Stefania doesn't seem to mind, changing to council president mode immediately. The three of them waved at her with an amazed expression as Stefania leaves.

(Alright, we tide over the dangerous period, but what's next?)

But made it through the stampede of demon beasts, but Eru don't think things are over yet. He looked back at Cloquet's forest, which seems to be growing darker as if it wants to mask itself from Eru's sight.

Even Eru is not sure what is lurking deep within the forest.

"And so, we are moving out tomorrow?"

The instructors are unable to come to a consensus for the next course of action. This is understandable as they have not grasped the whole situation at hand. Anyway, they have informed everyone of this course of action over dinner. Eru and the others drink the soup made from common vegetables and the food they brought along while they confirm the circumstances.

"Correct, we have many wounded but no one is in danger of dying, the worse is just fractures. There are many who have depleted their mana and is exhausted. The teachers feel it is dangerous to move with our lack of fighting power."

"Hai, isn't it dangerous to rest here?"

"The horses will also be affected by the dark. The instructors decided that being attacked while moving tiredly on the carriage is too risky, it is better to wait for day break while taking advantage of the base camp's defenses. I think we won't be attacked by demon beasts in such numbers any time soon."

"Oh-- what an optimistic view."

"Not really, all the options are like a gamble, this is simply choosing the safest option. If something do come in the middle of the night, it will be easier for the Silhouette Knight to defend if we stay put."

What they can do now is to rest well, detect danger early and react to the situation. In the end, they have to depend on themselves. After dinner, they try to relax and shake off their tense emotions, putting their hopes in making it to Jantunen in the morning.

But they missed an important thing-- What created the stampede?

They didn't notice that the demon beast heading their way was desperate, as if something was chasing them to the west.

They only regret missing this detail during the twilight hours just before dawn.

The red sun rises slowly over the mountain range. The students who took the

last shift suppress their drowsiness and yawns. The surrounding is peaceful. After meeting the large scale migration of the demon beast, there are almost no demon beast left in Cloquet's forest. The whole forest seems to have died with a silent air about it.

-- And that silence was broken suddenly. They noticed the weird noises coming from the forest. The sound of trees breaking and falling appears to follow a rhythm. Something heavy seems to be hitting the ground. It didn't take long for them to understand what that means, sounding the alarm immediately.

"Oh shit! A big one! A big one is coming!"

Both instructors and students who are sleeping jumped out of bed when the alarm sounded. They didn't sleep well because of the tension, so everyone was moving once they got up. The high school knight runners who are dragging their tired bodies to perform their stand by duties mount their Silhouette Knights, activating them immediately to guard the entrance to the forest.

The sound of trees falling can be heard clearly now along with the thundering footsteps. It is clear that something big is approaching.

"Hey, isn't this bad?"

It goes without saying that everyone can feel this is a crisis like never before. In this intense atmosphere, everyone's eye is drawn towards the forest entrance.

There are no demon beast larger than duel level in Cloquet's forest, the reason why it was chosen for the field trip. But the footfall of the approaching beast is telling of how large it is.

A large demon beast that shouldn't appear in Cloquet's forest. The swarms of demon beast that attacked them out of nowhere.

The demon beast wave was so large as if the whole forest was rushing out. Could it be they were chased out by the intruding colossal beast?

The trees near the entrance fell like dominoes. Finally, the demon beast appears with the light of the breaking dawn. It is covered in uneven armor with protruding edges. It is easily mistaken to be a mountain and humanity's strongest weapon, the Silhouette Knight looks as weak as a child in contrast. The eyes that is disproportionately small scans the area before it.

Everyone was awestruck, feeling fearful and weak before its majesty. Land Emperor -- the colossal beast that appeared at the border of the nation, is now advancing dangerously close to Jantunen.

An abnormal silence enclosed this space. It spurns from the tension between the demon beast and the people present.

The humans on scene, Laihiala's students, are awed by the gargantuan sized behemoth and can't move. The elite knights posted to the front lines were also stunned when they met behemoth, it is too much to ask 15 years old student to find enough courage to stand up to it.

During this moment when time seems to freeze, the behemoth moved first with its calmer state of mind. It looks around, opens its mouth and howl. Instead of sound, it feels closer to being a shock wave moving through the air. Its horrifying lung capacity release a roar that trembles the earth, shattering several trees near to it. The armor of the Silhouette Knight closest to it shivers, and it took a few steps backwards because of the pressure. The sound is so loud the students curled up in a ball cupping their ears, some even fainted from the shock wave.

This is the signal that undid their bindings. When they start to move, the silence before is just like an illusion. Everyone is running away from the demon beast as if they were pushed back. This is not because they have come to their senses, but chaotic actions due to their state of panic. The instructors lost control of the situation, everyone is just focused on running away from behemoth.

Escaping is the best option under such circumstances, but the way they are doing it is bad. The range a human can travel on foot is limited, they need to run to the carriage if they want to escape further. The panic stricken students didn't think about that and is just concentrating on getting away in any direction.

Just as the group were dispersing, there was suddenly an explosion to the front. No matter how terrified the people are, they won't run into an explosion. The student body's movement stopped for an instant and a figure used to chance and jump in front of everyone.

"Get away! Run! It's dangerous! Everyone head for the carriage!"

Following Eru's lead, the few students who kept their wits shot out Fireball, preventing the group from spreading out. They attract the attention of the

students with spells, herding them towards the carriage like hunting guides. They are still far from being calm, but the group is stable enough to understand instructions. They run towards the carriage in order to escape from behemoth.

The middle schoolers are not the only one awed by the behemoth, it was the same for the high school knight runners. Because they are in possession of the power of the Silhouette Knights, behemoth is a bigger threat to them. With the responsibility that comes with this power, they can't run away; even if they want to fight, the enemy is too strong.

"Don't stop! Move--!"

Caught in a dilemma because of an enemy out of their league, the first to snap out of it is Edgar. Be it fight or flight, remaining still before behemoth is as good as suicide.

The knight runners finally recognize the behemoth is preparing to charge and tries to evade in a panic. The momentum of the beast is incomparable to anything in this world. Even a Silhouette Knight won't stand a chance in its face. The pilots break out in cold sweat, losing the will to fight. What can they do to battle this terrifying demon beast?

But one man, Edgar, suppress his fear when he realize the advancement route of the behemoth coincides with the carriages the middle schoolers are using to flee and says with resolve:

"I will distract the behemoth! Everyone, please lend me your strength!"

"Huh? Edgar! Do you know what you are saying!? That is a behemoth! It will send all of us flying with a kick!"

"I know! But our juniors will be wiped out if we let it rampage. No, not just that. It will assault Jantunen if it heads down the same way as the carriages!"

Helvi who snapped at Edgar knows too. There is nowhere to run even if they escape from here, it will just lead to more collateral damage. She grit her teeth with enough force to splinter it.

"We have no choice but to go through with it...!"

"We are knights. We learn swordsmanship and piloting in order to protect our kingdom; how can we run without a fight!"

Edgar equip magic armament onto Earl Cumber as he spoke. The ether reactor is running the flow of mana activates the magic armament... the whole Silhouette Knight glows dimly.

"I don't want to die pointlessly too. We need to draw the behemoth's attention!"

"Hai, there's no other way!"

Edgar don't want to lose the spirit he managed to squeeze out. Earl Cumber led the charge, aiming at the behemoth's leg.

"All units draw staff! Use magic bombardment to draw its attention and pull back!"

Edgar shouts as he pulls his control stick all the way back. Earl Cumber channels its mana to the magic armament under the control of its pilot, lightning staff Arquebus. The tip of the simple longish weapon glows brightly, a lightning strikes at behemoth with a flash.

Unfortunately the blast has no effect. One reason is the behemoth is too big, the other factor is the electricity was directed to the ground from the armored shell without hurting the interior.

The other 3 Silhouette Knight apart from Edgar has also armed themselves with magic armaments, circling around the behemoth while firing their overed spells. It is hard to tell the effectiveness of the attacks, but they achieve their goal of getting the behemoth's attention. The behemoth turns its head when he noticed the disturbance, looking at the Silhouette Knights casting spells at it with annoyed eyes.

"How... It is ineffective..."

"It's fine! Don't stop and run! We just need to buy some time!"

The knight runners understood the behemoth is focusing on them, so they lure the behemoth away from the middle schoolers and retreat at full speed.

As the high school pilots battles the behemoth, the middle schooler is rushing onto the carriage.

Because of the number of people, only about half of them have evacuated despite the carriages being dispatched one by one.

(There are still a lot of people left... we need more time, we can only depend on our seniors now...)

Eru stands at the end of the line, looking at the fight between behemoth and the Silhouette Knight with a grim expression. Using spells beyond human capability -- overpowered spells are negated by the invulnerable armor shell, leaving no trace of injury. Before the colossal beast, even the crystallization of human technology, the Silhouette Knights are insignificant. The Eru being just one person is even more powerless.

His face is serious. The situation of the high school pilots are overwhelming bad... No, it is hopeless, their attacks do no damage at all. Their tactic revolves around retreating, disrupting it with deft movements. The Silhouette Knights will fall with just a single hit because of the difference in mass. If the pilot continues to accumulate fatigue and stress -- it is hard to think of a good ending.

(I will evacuate everyone, so don't die senpai...!)

No matter how fast a Silhouette Knight is, there is no guarantee it can get out of the way of a behemoth charging with a full head of steam. Hence, the other Knights will concentrate their attack on the behemoth to divert the behemoth's attention if it locks on to their comrades. Their attack did not hurt the behemoth, but it was frustrated with the annoyance.

"Hahaha! Is that it, this thing is big, but can't do anything to us!"

Dietrich shouts. In order to overcome the intimidating aura stemming from the gigantic body of the beast, he has to convince himself that he has the upper hand. It was meant to motivate himself, but because the tactic to stall for time is working too well, they are taking things lightly. Could it be this is a slow and dumb beast that is all bark but no bite? In actual fact, it will take just one hit to shatter a Silhouette Knight, but toying with the behemoth this way has dulled their sense of judgment.

For a short time, they seem to be successful in their bid to drag out the battle. The behemoth that is chasing after the escaping Silhouette Knights slowed down suddenly. The pilots watch the behemoth's changes, as it took a huge breath with a lung capacity appropriate for its colossal size, sucking in an illogical

amount of air.

The next second, a fierce breath of tornado shot out from its mouth. This is a ranged magic attack. The pilots who assumed the behemoth can only charge and attack physically were caught off guard by the sudden projectile spell. A tornado went ahead in a straight line, the turbulence from the current engulfed a machine that didn't get away in time. The Silhouette Knight can't resist the raging air currents which twist its armor and squash its crystal tissue.

The 10m tall mass of steel -- the Silhouette Knight flew into the sky and fell heavily to the ground. The impact shatters the limbs which has the least durability which breaks off from the torso. Because the Silhouette Knights are humanoid shaped, its tattered image burns deep into the heart of the pilots.

"Hya! Ugu... Wah!"

Dietrich saw the whole process clearly. His classmate who have been with him through high school -- and his Silhouette Knight was destroyed, making him scream as if his throat was spasming.

The next moment, another machine disappeared before Dietrich's eyes with a loud bang. He didn't understand what happened, but he gets it when he shift his gaze.

Behemoth struck with its tail. The moment that machine stopped, it was hit by the tail which was swinging with inertia, flying out in a twisted lump. Dietrich is safe because of luck -- his position was slightly out of range. He would have been swept by the tail if he was a couple of steps forward.

Two Silhouette Knights was easily shattered like some pottery in a blink of an eye. The pilot realized how wrong they are to think they can hold behemoth off somehow. Behemoth turn its head towards the surviving Silhouette Knights as if it was flaunting how easily it can destroy the Silhouette Knights. The perpetrator of the entire incident is targeting them next.

"Wwwwaaaaahhhh!"

"Oooorrrraaaaa!"

The two sound coincides with each other. The former was Dietrich screaming in horror because of the demon beast; the latter was Edgar shout to overcome the fear in his heart to steel himself.

(Damn! How can I be so careless! Behemoth is a battalion level demon beast... I knew it was a monster that can be handled by the handful of us!)

Edgar can't forgive himself for the loss of his comrade's life because he underestimate the enemy. His anger is stronger than his fear, pushing him on.

"Everyone avoid facing it head on! No matter what, evasion takes priority! Just a bit more, everyone please hang on!"

They have engaged the behemoth, everyone will wipe out if they turn and run suddenly. After hearing Edgar's spirited voice, the other knight runners respond to him even though they are shivering from fear. All of them use everything they have got to dodge the behemoth's attack. Right now, they can only put their life on the line and keep pestering the behemoth.

Under the rampage of the behemoth's magic, the high school pilots forced into a dire situation.

Eru and the others safely evacuated the middle schoolers, and he hopped onto the last carriage himself. He watched the battle from the carriage speeding away from behemoth. The high schoolers are at a severe disadvantage with the magic attack of the behemoth, killing off any chance of them running away even if Eru and the rest have gone away. The conversation he had with Edgar flashed across his mind. Even if his message won't reach them, the only thing he can do now is to give his support.

At this moment, a red shadow appeared in the corner of Eru's eye. He turn his head in a hurry and was shocked after identifying it. The red shadow was the Silhouette Knight, Güell.

Could it be... As he thinks, he turn his head ahead and see the battle still raging on between the behemoth and the other Silhouette Knights. This mean Güell is abandoning the other students and escaping by himself. Eru jump off the carriage when he understand this. Everyone was stunned by his action and couldn't stop him. He run after Güell with the speed of a bullet.

A red Silhouette Knight was running in the bright forest under the sunny sky.

The quiet forest extends all around it, there are nothing in the surrounding. But

the red machine was focused in its task, sprinting hard as if it was being chased. In fact, the red Silhouette Knight Güell and its pilot Dietrich Cunitz was pressed into this situation with no route to escape. What is driving Dietrich is pure terror. The image of his classmate's Silhouette Knight being crushed by behemoth cycles in his mind endlessly. Dietrich don't even dare to turn back, blindly pushing Güell to sprint forward. Although he is not the one running, but his lungs are constricted because of fear and his breathing is irregular.

Knight runners have absolute trust in their machines. There are demon beast which have power beyond the Silhouette Knights, but Dietrich don't think they are invincible. He was not prepared to face an enemy that shrug off attacks and can destroy Silhouette Knights in one move. In the end, he fell into a state of panic and he made the shameful choice of saving himself by sacrificing his classmates.

But the goddess of fate did not let him off so easily.

Güell's speed suddenly drop drastically. Although Dietrich is in a state of panic, he immediately thought of a reason for this. He went through the battle earlier and sprinted at full speed. he didn't display the calmness he show in his training, running hard in an inefficient manner. What awaits him is a dead battery.

The fear that accompany his immobility seizes Dietrich, but he can still do something about it. He stops Güell and switch to standby mode to rest and recover his mana reserve. After confirming that behemoth is not pursuing him, he sigh in relief and steadies his hurried breathing.

After stopping, he gather some of his wits and felt a strong pang of regret. He shakes his head to clear away this thought. But being unable to move, all sorts of thoughts emerges, pushing Dietrich to a corner.

-- That's right, I abandoned my comrades and ran--

-- Leaving your brother in arms behind, a shameful behavior for knights--

(So... so what! Staying there means dying in vain! I only chose to live, and the code of chivalry didn't say anything about dying for nothing!)

Dietrich denies the accusations of his own conscience. His calm breathing becomes hurried again, he didn't even notice his hand holding the control stick is becoming stiff because he was gripping too hard. His eyes open wide as he sweat profusely as he affirms and denies his own thoughts.

Dietrich who was tormented by his own thoughts heard sound that drew nearer from the distance and came to his senses. That is the screeching sound of compressed air, which is followed by the sound of metal rubbing on metal. His vision ahead was suddenly widened and he can't react because of how sudden things are happening.

The chest plate armor of Silhouette Knights are connected by compressed air for ease of entry into the cockpit. But it is opened suddenly, although he didn't activate the control for the hatch, and has no reason to do so. To open the hatch from the outside, you have to manipulate a complicated set of levers and have to be careful of not dismantling the armor by accident. From this situation, someone is opening the hatch from the outside by lever.

A figure jumped up to the open hatch which confirm his deduction. A petite body with a head of silvery purple hair. That figure is Ernesti who smiles casually at Dietrich and says:

"I finally caught up with you Senpai."

Eru said with a simple tone as if he has simply forgotten to bring something. Eru tilts his head and continued:

"I will go straight to the point Senpai, did you ran away?"

For Eru, this question was meant to be a confirmation, but Dietrich trembled when he heard Eru. The sudden appearance of his junior asking so bluntly made him hysterical.

"...! Ah, d... damn... right! Running... what's wrong with that! Just missing one man won't change the tide of battle! Why do I have to die in vain? The chivalry code doesn't tell us to abandon our lives!"

Dietrich repeats his thoughts, not caring how broken his logic was. He is not answering Eru, but trying to convince himself. Eru nods with his usual peaceful smile and said to the agitated Dietrich:

"That's great."

"... What?"

Dietrich didn't expect such a reaction and lift up his head tongue tied. Great?

What did he say to make Eru so happy?

"Because this is sufficient reason for me to borrow Güell from you."

When Dietrich realize what he meant, Eru has drawn his Winchester. This is the last scene he remember while he was still conscious.

After falling Dietrich with a single air bullet, Eru made a pleased expression and nod his head with satisfaction. Although he can sympathize with Dietrich's situation, Eru is still angry.

Eru perk himself up and scan the cockpit. Silhouette Knights are 10m tall giants, but the cockpit was tight and messy with all sorts of gears. Most prominent is the seat in the center, the control stick to the side and the pedals under the seat. The knight runner controls the Silhouette Knight by holding the control sticks and stepping on the pedals. Eru recalls the functions of the pilot seat and the activation procedure.

After Eru undo the harness and was preparing to drag the unconscious Dietrich out, he thought of something.

"If I leave him here knocked out, won't he die if wild beast attack him?"

Although he was angry at Dietrich for running away by himself, Eru was not willing to kill him. After contemplating for a while, Eru saw some space behind the seat. The cockpit of Silhouette Knights will usually have blankets, food, first aid kit for emergency supplies, enough for a few days of solo travel if they lost contact with their team. These items are stuffed behind their seat so they won't interfere with their piloting.

"Eh, it's a bit of a waste, but I can make space here."

Eru randomly pulled out some of the items and threw them out. After confirming there is enough space, he squeeze the unconscious Dietrich in there. Although this position is uncomfortable for humans, but Eru wasn't bothered.

After 'settling' Dietrich, Eru turns towards the seat. Unfortunately, the size is designed for high schoolers. Eru won't be able to reach the control stick and pedals with his stature. The seat does not have the convenient function of being adjustable like the cars back on earth.

Eru already anticipated this, he came with a plan in mind. He slash at the

consoles on either side of the seat calmly, destroying its casing. He is not doing this out of frustration. He pulled out silver wires from within the destroyed panels -- Silver Nerves. Eru coiled the wires around Winchester, sat down and buckle himself in. Winchester is made from white mist tree that is an excellent conductor of mana, it becomes a primitive control input device by entangling Silver Nerves around it.

"... I have to do this live with no backup plan, failure is not an option."

The Silver Nerves transmit mana and scripts through the control stick and pedals to the magic engine, which in turn uses scripts to operate the Silhouette Knight. The command of the pilots are interpreted by the magius engine, transforming them into scripts to move each part of the Silhouette Knight. Taking this concept to the extreme, if you have great control over the scripts, you can operate the Silhouette Knights without control sticks.

But that is only in theory. It is difficult for pilots to conceptualize and control Silhouette Knights through scripts alone, so the control stick and pedals are necessary to reduce the burden on pilots and simplify the control. By having physical control sticks and pedals that matches the 4 limbs of the pilots, the movement of these controls can be used as input data for the maneuver of the robot, a semi automatic mode of control. The current way of riding a Silhouette Knights is a combination of physical control and script transmission, a balance between simplicity of control and complexity of actions that can be taken.

The problem Eru has with the Silhouette Knight lies with the difficulty in using the physical controls. That's why he plans to use total script control from the start, using his own magius circuit to handle the large stream of control scripts. This is an absurd idea, but Eru has script processing speed beyond the realm of normal humans, so it is a worthwhile bet.

Eru took a light breath, calms down, close his eyes and concentrate.

The Winchester connects to the Magius engine through the Silver Nerves. Normally, it is the knight runner who answers the magic input query, so it did not have any resistance to the pilot assuming direct control. It was surprisingly easy to establish a bypass route. Eru's conscious became one with the Silhouette Knight, reading and processing the pre programmed scripts in the magic engine.

Eru analyze the script with his eyes close. He construct a magic program from nothingness, growing it outwards in all directions. Arms stretch out from Eru's mind to draw the magic program -- reading its contents. Even though the code

and symbols are different, but being in the flow of data is nostalgic, and he smile gently.

"Alright, time to let you see the power of a professional programmer."

He begin analyzing the core of the magic scripts at a fast pace, starting by comparing what he have learned so far with the scripts within the magius engine.

"Starting pattern analysis... Similar scripts detected, physical boost, Amplifier..."

Most of the script in the magius engine is similar to the script he knew. Eru identify them one at a time, using the script to understand its purpose. The more similarity there is, the faster he can grasp the internal workings.

"The base is physical boost? Crystal tissue is the emulation of muscle tissues. To move them, the theory is the same..."

Using Architect sigils, he dissect each scripts. Each part forms complicated patterns and are interconnected, the magic program is expanding to the limit of his conscious.

"The control of the crystal tissue... placement, the connection between each modules, output control, this is the mana output of the ether reactor..."

Güell which was kneeling on one knee in standby mode trembles slightly. Its fingers move, its eyes begin to focus and see the surroundings clearly.

"To activate... I will need to connect my physical boost with the movement script of the Silhouette Knight. It needs to be converted to accommodate the Silhouette Knight, using the default output control parameters to move..."

The mana produced by the ether reactor execute the script issued by the pilot, broadcast out to the entire Silhouette Knight through the Silver Nerves. The Silhouette Knight loyally obeys the command, using the mana stored in the crystal tissue to contract and expand. The machine vibrates, standing up slowly like a new-born deer.

"Operation parameter conversion complete, activation start... Adjusting output values, mana reserves adequate. Okay, take one step..."

Güell's gigantic body balanced itself awkwardly, taking one heavy step after

another, taking large but unsteady strides. The movement is like a zombie, staggering and slow.

"Feedback adjustment, optimizing."

Eru uses the feedback details from practical movements to scan for excessive movement in the crystal tissue and debugs the script. These script still have traces of being a magic script, but errors was detected by synchronizing movement and user input, optimizing it in a short time. Güell's movement changed from unsightly shuffling to a graceful walk in the span of a few steps.

It has been half an hour since Eru started accessing the magius engine. The Silhouette Knight, the weapon which is the crystallization of humanity's wisdom is now completely under his control.

Güell moves as Eru wishes. There are no lag because of physical defects or inefficient scripting. It is one with the pilot, making total full control a reality.

The situation is dire.

The high school knight runners are in a deadly battle all this while, so Eru issued Güell a command. It accepts the command and start sprinting as if to make up for all the time that was wasted.

But--

As he run, Eru's expression shift from tension to a smile. He don't feel anxious or pressured. The reason is simple, Eru is piloting a robot right now. The robot follow his wishes and is sprinting wildly.

Eru didn't think too much when he chased after Güell, he was too preoccupied when accessing the magius engine. He only have the leisure to think after he start moving, coming to terms with what he is doing.

Eru thinks it is childish to react this way, but he can't contain his emotions.

"Ah, Ahhh, Ahhhhhh! Robot robot, I am piloting a running robot!"

For him, be it the tremor from each step the machine took, the Holo Monitor showing the scenery that is disappearing at an horrifying fast pace or the inertia Eru is feeling, all of it feels so blissful. Who can stop the Eru's joyous laughter? Eru forgot about the powerful demon beast that is waiting for him ahead,

immersing himself in the happiness of piloting a Silhouette Knight.

Güell ferries Eru who is forgetting about his original objective as well as the foaming and unconscious Dietrich towards the battlefield at an amazing pace.

Chapter 8

The trees in the plain increase in number gradually until its density matches that of a forest.

A road paved with stones extends to the east in this forest; this is the biggest road in Fremmevira kingdom that leads to the east -- 'East Fremmevira highway'. From Känkänen to Jantunen is the 'West Fremmevira highway' and from Jantunen to the kingdom's border is the East Fremmevira highway. These two highways are built with cobble stones, a historical route that was paved for the ease of transport when constructing the fortress at the front lines. It now shoulders the duty of intra-kingdom transport; its active use matches its reputation as the leading traffic junction.

The road that are used frequently by caravans with Silhouette Knight escorts is desolated. It might be due to the demon beasts stampede or the rumors spreading among merchants about the sightings of a gargantuan demon beast.

There is a tense silence on this road, which was broken suddenly.

The sounds of hooves from dozens of carriage reverberate in the air as they ferries the Laihiala pilot academy students who are escaping. The high school knight runners are risking their life to cover the evacuation, so the carriages was running at full speed. But this is too taxing on the horses, so the pace now is slower than normal. Even so, they are already halfway to Jantunen.

The exhausted students sat in the carriage. They weren't chased by any demon beast during this period. They have calmed down after some time, but the uneasiness in their chest lingers.

"What happened to Eru--?"

With this solemn atmosphere, Chid and Ady sat on the last carriage, looking behind them blankly. Eru jumped off the carriage and entered the forest when they were escaping from Cloquet's forest. It happened so suddenly that they lost track of him before they can even try to stop Eru.

"... Hey, could it be..."

Chid mumbles as if he had thought of something. Ady tilt her head questioningly.

"That guy, did he hijack a Silhouette Knight to join the fight?"

Impossible-- Ady wants to dismiss it, but fell into deep thought. The probable deduction morphs into a clear image in her mind. Common sense tells her that Eru who did not attend pilot school can't control a Silhouette Knight. But he might make it work with what he learned through self study-- She didn't know that Eru has actually succeeded. Ady easily imagined the face of Eru challenging the Land Emperor head on, it seems so natural.

"Ah-- Yeah, that makes sense. Eru will probably do that."

"No need to worry. He can run away with those legs of his if things goes awry."

The magic invented by Eru called 'Aero Thrust' is surprisingly fast. Who can catch up with Eru who is faster than wolves and rivals that of a bird? Even if the opponent is that mammoth demon beast, Eru can run away if he puts his mind to it. The two of them imagine that scene and laugh.

As they predicted, Eru has hijacked Güell right now and is charging towards Behemoth. It is hard to tell if it is a blessing or a misfortune that the twins on the shaking carriage has no idea about this.

The instructor on the carriage in front alerts the entire convoy. Clouds of dust can be seen in the direction they are heading, and they hear the sound of horse hooves in the distance. Everyone understands what is causing all this racket. A group of Silhouette Knights-- the standard model 'Cardatore' is advancing in a column. All citizens of Fremmevira kingdom is familiar with these figures and understands why they are here.

"...The garrison knights of Jantunen!"

The voice of the instructor on the leading carriage reaches the carriages at the back. The students poke their head out of the carriages one by one, their face bright with excitement.

This group is a scale larger than two platoons, consisting of roughly 90 Silhouette Knights. They are followed by the maintenance and supplies corps. Most of Jantunen's military forces are here, the most they can muster one day after receiving the envoy from Balguerie.

Cardatores are the official mass produced standard model, with rugged exterior. After experiencing many battles, it has a unique charm to it. Their shoulder

armor are decorated with the Fremmevira Kingdom flag and the Jantunen city crest, displaying the pride they have in protecting this land.

The Laihiala students are not uneasy anymore. No matter how mighty the demon beast is, the band of knights will defeat it. They have faith in the power and credibility of the knights.

A sense of relief spreads among the knights who discovered the carriage at the same time. Although they have set off as soon as possible, but they have already prepared themselves mentally to the possibility of the entire Laihiala student body being massacred. From the looks of things, most of them made it out safely, and have brought with them valuable information about the current location of behemoth.

"I see... the high school knight runners..."

It includes information on why the Laihiala students can evacuate safely. A lot of the knights are graduates of Laihiala pilot academy, and are moved by the honorable actions of their juniors and steel themselves.

"Please rest assured. In order to protect our kingdom, and not let their sacrifice be in vain, we will crush the enemy."

The Jantunen knights engrave this determination within their heart, their morale grows stronger than before. The band of knights learned that the Laihiala students met the behemoth less than half a day ago, so their meeting with the behemoth is at hand. The tension of the knights grow sky high with each step they take.

A red Silhouette Knight is sprinting wildly in the lush forest. Its speed is incredible, double that of a normal Silhouette Knight.



Because Eru is controlling with magic scripts, he is now in sync with the magius engine. His thoughts is converted into scripts that is transmitted to the entire machine body without any lag. The crystal tissue of the Silhouette Knight is being moved, its reaction speed is better than organic muscles, executing commands without delays. Güell's now has double the reaction speed and movement speed of a standard Silhouette Knight.

Güell maintains its peak performance as it run, and hears the sound of howls in front. It was a mix of lightning explosion and raging winds. He will engage behemoth in a few minutes. Eru's expression twist with joy, showing unrestrained happiness as he begins his first battle in a Silhouette Knight.

With a dull thud of metal on metal, the steel giant was knocked into the sky. It flew under the tremendous force and hit the ground hard, tumbling a few rounds. No one can spare the effort to confirm the safety of the pilot, but from the way it lands, the caved in torso and the smashed arms, the pilot can't be unharmed.

"Damn!"

The high school knight runners kept on fighting after the middle schoolers evacuated. It's not that they didn't want to run, they don't have the luxury of showing their back to behemoth. The battle has raged on for some time, compared to the fatigue showing on the pilot's faces, the behemoth live up to its name of being a fortress, showing no signs of slowing down. There is also an overwhelming difference in strength between them, the discrepancies in endurance is surfacing with each passing second.

Facing pressure that the knights at the borders failed to withstand, the high school pilot's machine fell one by one, there are only 3 left.

Behemoth's tail swing towards Earl Cumber whose pilot Edgar was distracted by his comrade's demise. Edgar instinctively felt that he can't dodge the tail bending like a whip and push the stance of Earl Cumber as low as possible while swinging the shield on his left arm, parrying the blow. An incredible technique only Edgar who is the elite in high school can pull off with the help of Earl Cumber's excellent performance. But the shield was knocked away from his hand with just the tail's glancing blow. Earl Cumber cautiously steady its stance and pull away from behemoth.

(I lost my shield! This is bad, the situation is desperate!)

Even so, Earl Cumber's damage is slight, the other two machine's mana pool and damage is at their limit and might expire any second now. Edgar can't shake off the foreboding sense of doom that flashed across his mind. His team couldn't hold on much longer and might be wiped out in 5 minutes...

Behemoth didn't let up its attack, shooting out tornado breath again. The raging wind has a large area of effect, they could be pulled in if they don't get further away.

"Please... Trandorches, move!"

Helvi realized that the tornado breath was aimed at her and scream like a banshee as she tries to get away. Trandorches squeeze out its last ounce of strength despite the accumulated fatigue and damage, but lost its balance because of the fierce air current.

"Helvi! -- Damn it, make it in time!"

Edgar roars, commanding Earl Cumber to charge at behemoth who is in turn closing in on Helvi in order to distract it. He hang on to a glimmer of hope and fires his Silhouette Arms, Arquebus. His full power attack bounce harmlessly off the armored shell while behemoth is still locked onto the Silhouette Knight before it. The running behemoth accelerates, closing in on Trandorches that is struggling to stand.

Just as Helvi and even Edgar was prepared for the next victim to appear--

"Ah hahahaha! Hue hahaha! Found it -- I am here!"

A red Silhouette Knight intrudes into the battle field with arrogant laughter. The first thing he saw in the forest is behemoth that is about to run over the robot lying on the ground.

Güell increase its speed instantly, rushing to behemoth's left flank like a scarlet bullet. It draws its sword on the way and lunge without thinking -- concentrating his power at a single point, aiming at one of the few weak points of the demon beast known as a fortress, which is its eyes.

Güell not only move at a speed beyond normal machines, and it is accurate and precise.

Before Güell's blade reach behemoth, it noticed the red figure -- because of that, it turns its head on reflex. The distance is too close to avoid, Güell's sword accurately caught up with the eyeball on behemoth's turned head. The sword looks as if it was drawn in, stabbing at the eyeball and colliding with the shell.

This is a pure coincidence.

The shell that should be protecting the behemoth's eyes have a slit. That was a crack a certain knight inflicted with the cost of his life half a month ago.

If behemoth didn't move and took the hit, this blow will probably be deflected by the shell covering it. But because it turned its head, the sword coincidentally pierce in from the gap.

Güell used double the speed of a Silhouette Knight and attack with a stab that focuses its entire metallic body weight. The sword screeches and sparks flew because of the friction as it penetrates the pupil of the giant beast. Eru thought his concentrated fatal attack will reach till the hilt, but it snapped in two loudly and shatters.

The surprise attack took out that eye, but it didn't reach into the skull. The sword can't withstand the impact of their collision and fractures.

Eru let go of the sword when he realized it broke and leap into the air to avoid hitting the behemoth head on. Güell slip pass the behemoth's charge with its massive body, spinning in mid air, followed by 2 back somersaults when it lands, pulling away from the behemoth before stopping.

The behemoth let out an angry howl that was never heard before. Blood sprays out profusely from its left eye socket, something it has never experienced permeate its body. The defense of the behemoth is top class among demon beast, and doesn't suffer injuries even when attacked. The pain of its eyes being pierced and losing half its field of vision is a setback it has seldom experienced.

Behemoth's remaining right eye is bloodshot as it searches for the accursed enemy that took its left eye. It lost interest in everything else, the only thing that matters is the red figure he last saw with its left eye.

The high school knight runners forgot they are still in a battle field as they stare at the scene before them dumbfounded. They can't keep up with the development. They thought Güell abandoned them, but it is back with amazing speed, and broke through the invulnerable shell of behemoth and blinded it.

The giant beast before them is howling furiously as it took aim at the red machine. It is only concerned about Güell, ignoring Edgar and the others.

"Right, Helvi!"

Edgar rush to the downed robot while behemoth is distracted. The exhausted Trandorches is damaged and can't walk properly. But Edgar is relief that Helvi is still alive.

Edgar felt a tremor and took a stance with Earl Cumber. He then realized that behemoth is charging at Güell with an angry howl. The one eye behemoth is even swifter than before, but Güell is more agile. Edgar question his eyes, the Güell he knows have never displayed such an performance before.

He even doubt whether Dietrich is piloting it. But he don't have the time to worry about that. If Güell can dodge behemoth's fierce attacks, that means Edgar has time to rescue his wounded comrades.

(Sorry Di, please hold him off for a while longer...!)

They turned their back to the scarlet robot dancing with the giant beast, leaning on each other as they escape.

Edgar didn't know Ernesti is piloting Güell or what his situation is like. Inside Güell, Eru is gleefully staring at the holo monitor that is displaying the approaching colossal body.

"So this is a behemoth, a demon beast and battle. This is... using a Silhouette Knight! To battle!"

A ferocious smile appears on his face.

His surprise attack yield results beyond his expectation. But the wounded and bloodied giant beast harbors even stronger killing intent and charge at Eru. With majesty comparable to mountains, it closes in with murderous intent and power that twist the very scenery. Even though the scene before him is enough to scare off veteran knights, Eru only felt intense joy.

"Come at me, come at me, come on come on!"

-- Piloting robots and fighting massive enemies.

The dream of every robot nerd. Is there anyone who doesn't wish for this? He has no intention of backing down, to move away from his happiness. Driven by the elation of his body, his chosen action is--

"Come on, I'm going ahead!"

Güell bend slightly and run at behemoth while kicking up earth with each step.

The close the gap in an instant. The moment before impact, Güell disappears from behemoth's vision. behemoth which lost an eye didn't noticed, charging at Güell's old position. Güell jumped a second before they collide, kicked off the behemoth's uneven armored shell and jump over it. For the blinded behemoth with limited field of vision, catching Güell is mission impossible. Eru somersault in mid air deftly as he thinks.

"Ah, ah ah, amazing! A shell with no gaps and weak points, invincible armor! It is too tough, even slashing at it with a running start won't help, magic attack is useless too. Alright, just use one of the cliché in destroying massive weapons!"

Eru mumbles nonsensically with heightened emotions, bending his knees smoothly to lessen the landing impact and draw Güell's spare sword.

"The weak point of massive guys are usually legs and joints. Let's start there!"

Güell use his running momentum and stab with terrifying accuracy at the back of the kneecaps, aiming for the gap between the shells. This attack hit the muscles behind the shell, but it felt tougher than imagined. Eru notice it and pulls out the sword, retreating from behemoth.

"Hmm -- it didn't go in! Other than the shell, is the rest of the body this tough too?"

Eru didn't expect the behemoth's physical boost to raise the endurance of internal tissues. To support its massive weight, behemoth have to focus on strengthening its four limbs, which is obvious and a nightmare for its foe.

Behemoth was agitated by the injury to its hind leg and turned around. Even a slight glaze from the limbs of the turning behemoth will be enough to destroy Güell. Eru pulls further back and run out of the behemoth's sight again as he review his previous attack.

"I didn't harm the joints just now, but it is more effective than hacking at the shell."

Hehe -- Eru is wearing a happy cute smile for some reason. He still stand a chance, but the execution is difficult, and need tenacity and patience.

"Seems like this will be a long fight... Eh, I'm fine with that, I don't really hate that."

Eru is smiling casually in the face of the raging beast and advanced with the red robot. The battle is just beginning.

(Ug... Hmmmm...?)

'He' finally wakes.

He sees a dark space in front. As his dull conscious clears, he feels a pain from his uncomfortable body posture.

"Uguu... here... here is..."

He tries to resume a normal position in the cramped space and groans, but a special pressure pins him to the wall in front.

He let out a muffled scream, the pressure clears his mind. What he felt was inertia -- A familiar sensation for all knight runners. But the inertia he felt was stronger than he remembered. This must be the pilot seat of the Silhouette Knight. When he thought about this -- Dietrich Cunitz recalls the last image from his memory. That's right, a short junior appear before him, and--

He hastily assume a normal position and lift his head from the back of the seat. The first thing he saw was the looming behemoth that filled the entire holo monitor.

"Gyaaaaahhhh!?"

You can't blame him for screaming like a chicken slaughtered chicken. He saw the close up of the ferocious beast straight after waking up. The sudden scream surprised Ernesti and he almost lost control.

"Oh no! Ha!"

After recovering from a tripping position, Güell slides to the left of the charging behemoth, evading it safely. Eru pulled away from the behemoth and glance behind before the behemoth gets ready to charge.

"Eh -- good morning senpai. We are in a life and death situation, so please keep quiet."

Dietrich jaws drop after listening to his calm tone that contradicts its contents. The words sound logical, but he don't understand why is he back here when he should have ran far away, his head is full of questions.

"You... you! Are... you insane!? No, before that, why are you fighting!?"

He have loads of questions to ask, but has to shut his mouth as Güell starts to run.

Behemoth's furious face fills the whole holo monitor. The giant beast is emitting a much more murderous air compared to his prior escape. This is beyond the extent of chasing obstacles away, but raging killing intent. Güell is moving at a speed that is faster than anything the knight runner Dietrich has experienced, dodging the massive beast's attack by a hair's breadth. After seeing several scene of imminent death, Dietrich didn't care about appearance and is on the verge of tears. He suppress his voice and grit his teeth, enduring it with a pitiful face. He knows if he said anything that distracts Eru, Güell might really be done in.

(What... is this!? What's happening!? Is this my punishment for running off alone?)

「怎麼
回事!？」



飛散在半空中。

Although he didn't know, the other machines are either destroyed or fallen back, there is only Güell battling alone here. It is ironic that the situation is the opposite of what happened when he fled. If Eru who is piloting the machine fights on, Dietrich can't escape again.

(Seems like I am fated to stay here... Why did he bring me along? He wants me to see the fight till the very end? He wants the man... who abandoned his comrades to watch?)

Eru can't leave him behind even if he wants to -- Dietrich won't be able to guess the truth. The titanic beast didn't care about Dietrich's feeling and the battle between the two rages on.

Behemoth uses its devastating strength to shatters the earth, its tornado breath uproots the trees. A glancing blow from these will be enough to kill, but Güell that is piloted by the petite youth is evading them happily and is even counter attacking the limbs of the beast.

Dietrich lost his cool when he woke up, but has gathered himself now and perplexed by another issue. Unbelievably, the young pilot is a match with the giant beast, although he is on the defensive. Because Dietrich was the pilot of Güell, he understands how amazing this is. The performance of this machine is average, the training robot in Laihiala pilot academy are 2nd rate equipment anyway. This is clear since the other Silhouette Knights piloted by high schoolers can't match the beast.

The problem lies with this pilot. Dietrich also knows this short 1st years that shows up at pilot school occasionally. He would have never believed this small youth have such outstanding piloting skills. But since he is taking the beast on right now, Dietrich have to give in.

(Too amazing, no, that is an inadequate description. This is 'strange'... But if I... If we want to survive, I have let him battle on...!)

Dietrich fell into the chasm of despair once, but he saw hope in the scene before him. A sense of longing grows in the feeble youth who lost to himself.

In Dietrich's eyes, Güell and Eru is fighting a steady battle. But in reality, they are not doing that well. There are two big and pressing issues.

First is the mana pool of Güell. The maximum time a Silhouette Knight can fight at full strength is 1 hour under normal conditions. Anymore and the mana supply will not be able to keep up with the usage rate, leading to diminishing performance. It has been 2 hours since Güell started the battle... This mean it has kept up peak performance in double the time.

This is thanks to Eru's delicate control and his grasp of the operating system. The optimization of the script lowers the mana consumption rate, limiting the usage of mana in tissues not in operation to conserve energy. Also, he is not running Güell at full power all the time, and include breaks for Güell to 'breath' and restore mana. His actions looks intense at first sight, but he has been secretly minimizing consumption rate once he decided to fight a long battle.

But that is still not enough, he has exhausted half his mana reserve. If this goes on, he can optimistically hang on for about 2 hours.

Next will be the weapon's wear and tear.

After attacking behemoth repeatedly for 2 hours, Güell's blade is twisted and full of cracks, making the attacks that causes minimal damage even less effective. There is also the magic armament, but Güell's 'Chasm' <kanji: wind blade> is not suitable for pin point attack.

Eru considered programming an overed spell, but doing that while controlling the Silhouette Knight is too great of a burden, especially if it is tactical level magic. He gave that up but his morale is still high, although the lacks of attacking means made him feel helpless.

(If I knew this will happen, I would have armed myself with several swords like a porcupine.)

Even though he is upset, Eru persist with his battle tactic. Or rather, he can't change it. Güell relies mainly on evasion while looking for a chance to win.

As the battle went on, even Dietrich noticed the frequency of counters are dropping. If they just want to survive, dodging will be fine, but they will lose in terms of endurance. If they plan to escape, they have to use this chance to attack the giant beast's legs and lowers its mobility. And attacking is a possibility with Eru's piloting skills. But Eru has let a number of opportunities go.

(Why are you not countering...! If you keep running like this, our chances of

escaping will fall!)

Dietrich anxiety rises as he can only watch. As a knight runners, Dietrich knows Silhouette Knights can't fight for long. He chose a time when Eru has evaded an attack and asked:

"Hey... Hey, Ernesti, you have not been countering for a while, what's wrong!?"

Eru was slightly surprised when the Dietrich who has been quiet suddenly spoke. But Eru explained the situation.

"Behemoth is too hard, the sword is tattered. The attacks are not damaging it."

Dietrich stole a glance at the sword through the holo monitor, the blade is twisted badly and is totally blunt. Dietrich moans.

(Need to think... find a weapon... we made it so far, we can't die now!)

He searched frantically from the scene displayed on the holo monitor for something that can be used as a weapon. Ernesti is piloting Güell, but there are things Dietrich can do as well. Dietrich is finally back on the battle field by his own will, his state of mind has changed drastically without him noticing, and his participation yield great results. Eru is also scanning the surroundings as he fights, but he has to dodge behemoth's charges, so he can't focus too much on the surroundings. That's why Dietrich is the one who noticed 'that'. He shouted loudly when he discover it:

"Besides the fallen Silhouette Knight! Take its weapon!"

Eru took just a second to look at the spot Dietrich pointed at and saw a Silhouette Knight that has broken down. Eru comprehends Dietrich's intention, accelerating after evading behemoth with a low posture almost hugging the ground. Eru charge forward and pick up a sword from the fallen robot. Since the high school pilots mainly used Silhouette Arms to attack, there is almost no damage on the sword. An invincible smile returns to Eru's face.

"Thank you senpai. I have been troubled because of my weapons."

"No... No need for thanks, just carry on fighting the behemoth!"

Eru faced the behemoth immediately and reevaluate its status. Its legs are bleeding after numerous slashes, meaning the damage it took is not trivial.

"Okay, mana pool is less than 50%. If I don't take down a leg, it will probably catch up if we escape."

Güell raise its new sword and begin its counter attack. Behemoth is massive, but is bad with intrinsic movements, so it's natural enemy is Güell which uses speed and precision as its weapons.

Behemoth uses its endless stamina to rampage. Although it has been attacking nonstop, it has yet to land a single hit. Güell on the other hand is dealing damage consistently to the giant beast. The wounds on behemoth's leg is significant. Dripping water can hollow a stone. With its eyes and limbs bleeding, even the fortress demon beast behemoth is slowing down.

Dietrich was the one to notice again.

Eru heard a shout from behind and scan the surrounding quickly and saw many Silhouette Knights. He won't miss that even if it is just a glance. These are 'Cardatores' that are synonymous to Silhouette Knights in Fremmevira Kingdom. They are spread out, surrounding Güell and behemoth in layers. After seeing their machine model and the flying flags, they understand their identity.

"Cardatore!? Ah, ahhh... that flag... it's Jantunen garrison knights! Reinforcement is here to rescue us!"

(They are here... sooner than I expected, I thought it will take a bit longer before I can escape and rendezvous with everyone.)

Eru quickly thought about his next course of action. Güell can still fight, but the mana pool is below 30%, it is at a critical juncture. Since the Calvary is here, there is no point in buying time and let the knights take over and retreat. The firepower of Güell alone is not enough, the forces here should do. He was just stalling for time when facing the giant beast just now, but the time to 'defeat' it has arrived.

The gargantuan beast is not concerned with the situation around it, stubbornly chasing Güell. Eru dodges easily, luring behemoth to turn its back to the knights. He then slip past the left side of the behemoth where it is blinded and dash towards the formation of the knights. The band of knights probably understand Güell's intentions and aimed with their Silhouette Arms.

The giant beast only have an eye for the detestable red figure, and is finally being led to the stage of the final battle.

A short time before the knights arrived at the battle field.

Several Silhouette Knights travels deftly in the forest instead of the stone pavement of Fremmevira's highway. They are the scouts of the Jantunen garrison knights, their mission is reconnaissance the status of the behemoth before the main party arrives.

After bashing into the forest from the highway, they found the density of the forest to be very high. Compared to using carriages and traveling by the highway, the team travels much faster by cutting through the forest. Behemoth is much closer to the highway than the position reported by the students, so the scouts completed their mission and report back in no time.

"Is that so? This is right ahead of us... behemoth not taking the highway is a silver lining."

Philip Hallhagen comments after listening to the scouting report. He was prepared to fight the behemoth on the highway if the situation calls for it, but that wasn't necessary. But his face turns stiff as he listen to the next report.

"We have linked up with 3 of the training robots, there is still one more engaged in battle..."

The high schooler's Silhouette Knights retreated from battle because of Güell's intrusion made it to the highway and is being protected by the garrison knights. Trandorches and another machine was critically damaged, and is sent to the maintenance crew at the back for major overhaul. The remaining Earl Cumber suffers minor damage and join the fighting ranks after receiving simple repairs.

The robot still in battle was Güell. When the scouts saw the scarlet knight, it was attacking with fearsome might. The scouts did not know how to report this, so they just gave the position of the beast and the fact that a machine was engaging it.

Philip and Gottfried plans the operation based on the gathered intelligence and relays the orders to all units. Their plan is as follows: They will spread out by squad level (9 machines) around the target in a semicircle. From the intelligence of the students who fought it, it is judged that close quarter combat with the giant

beast is very dangerous, so they will be using Silhouette Arms and attacking in waves from a distance to damage the behemoth.

They have also drawn up contingencies for the behemoth's charging and tornado breaths. They are expecting casualties, so the worse scenario will be the targeted squad will act as bait and stop behemoth's movement while the others move in for the kill. The knights move into the forest with the resolve to risk death in battle.

The howl of the mammoth beast makes the forest tremble.

As the knights move into position, the beast keeps turning in circles at the same spot, rampaging painfully. The knights were confused by this and were dumbfounded when they saw the reason. They see a red Silhouette Knight moving at incredible speed as the giant beast chases it with blood gushing out of an eye and howls with anger.

"What, what is that..."

The beast can shatter the Silhouette Knight with one blow, but the scarlet machine is using its superior speed to toy with it. Even the commander with his elite skills doubts whether he can match that speed. Everyone was impressed and sighs at this display. They understand that the giant beast is staying in place because it is persistently chasing the scarlet machine. It was too focus on the enemy before it and lost track of its surroundings.

This is a great chance for the knights.

Suddenly, the red robot notices the knights and stops. In the next instance, it lures the behemoth to turn its back to the knights and slip past the flank of the beast towards the knights. Philip grasped its intention and commands his entire force:

"Scarlet Knight... Thank you! Don't let this chance slip away! Everyone, ready your culverin <TL:kanji is Spear of flame>!"

Receiving the command from Philip who have lifted his sword, the Cardatores readies its magic armament 'culverin'. Their objective is to attack in unison with magic, using their numbers to overwhelm the enemy.

The red machine did not slow down, slipping to the back of the formation. Philip swing his sword down as it pass through the last ranks.

"All units, fire!"

The knights anticipated this signal and shot out flames on cue at the behemoth with their culverins. The high pitch sound reverberates as fire trails flash through the sky towards the center of the semi circle, raining down at the mountain sized monster.

Countless flaming lance pierce at the behemoth who was engrossed with the scarlet knight. The overed spell flaming lance explodes in columns of flames like a lotus within the forest. The tongues of flame engulf the entire beast, the fire is so big that they can't see what is happening. Even so, the knights did not slow down their persistent attack.

Güell who made it past the knights stopped at the rear of the formation to rest his machine and recover its mana pool. The machine appears to be fatigue after making through a fierce battle, the ether reactor churns noisily as it runs at full speed.

"... That's great! Well done! How, how's that? Damn demon beast, this is the power of the garrison knights! Hahaha!"

Eru frowns when he heard the maniacal laughter of Dietrich behind him. Eru didn't relax as he watches the hellish flame before him. The culverins kept up its attack and the scale of the fire is increasing gradually, determined to burn everything inside it. Even the behemoth which took pride in its defenses won't be able to escape unscathed from this attack.

(But it is not an opponent that can be dealt with so simply...)

It is impossible for the situation to go as Eru hoped and the space that is burning is changing. The fire that is burning fiercely is swirling in the form of a whirlpool. No, it is not just the flame that are swirling, but the air current about it is sucking the flames in, turning it into a tornado of fire. The knights sense that something was wrong and adopt an defensive stance, but kept up their attack.

The tornado flame finally evolved. The next second, it turns into a slithering burning snake and whips at the knights.

"What, what is that!"

The burning snake spits at the knights as it struggles, the flame that was shot

out by the knights was dispersed into the surroundings. Fortunately, the knights kept their distance when they attack, so the tornado breath was not fatal. Although they knew about the existence of the tornado breath, they didn't expect behemoth to use it inside that fiery pit, stunning the knight and disrupting their formation.

With the formation falling apart, the attack from the culverins slowed down. Behemoth realized this and kick at the remaining fire and leap out of the fire pit. After its shell was baked in hellish flames that can melt steel, it is burning hot and several wounds can be seen on the giant beast. The injuries on its limb sustained from Güell's slashes are burnt badly after the baptism by fire. On the whole, the colossal beast suffered serious damage.

The movement of the behemoth has also slowed significantly, but it is still known as an extraordinary tough beast with absurd endurance. The charge of the beast was enough to make the knights who are reforming scatter. Behemoth's massive body is in the middle of the reforming group. The movement of the knights are slow because they are in the midst of forming ranks, making things worse. A number of machines was knocked away during the giant beast's advance, the robots that fell down was mercilessly trampled into lumps of junk.

Some of them tried to engage the behemoth. The shell that was weakened by the heat can be sliced by the sword, but the blade twist and shatters before it reaches the interior. Even wounded, the close quarter battle between the beast and the Silhouette Knights are hopelessly one sided, a squad of knights are forced into a corner.

Although the knights are prepared to sacrifice their life, they are unable to attack the position that will hit their allies. The occasional magic attack stops and their 'ace' shows itself.

"Squad 2, 4 and 8, ready the 'hammer'!"

Phillips in his command machine 'Sordwort' swings his sword, his instruction gives a sense of purpose to the battle. The knights was prepared to die in this battle, and with the battle turning into a melee fight, they restrains the beast's movement and show their ace in the hole.

The Silhouette Knights carrying a massive weapon and starts running to either flanks of the behemoth. They are moving the 'hard crust bunker' that requires 4 Silhouette Knights to use -- simply put, it is just a giant lump of steel in the shape of a stake.

As shown from its name, the battering ram that needs 4 Silhouette Knights to move can easily destroy a siege wall, the ace they prepared for the demon beast with the reputation of a fortress.

The battering ram is a powerful weapon, but it has the weakness of being 'slow and heavy'. It is a type of weapon that changes mass into destructive force, so it requires 4 Silhouette Knights to wield. It is also big in size, so it is a hassle to deploy or withdraw with it. To hit the demon beast, they need to seal its movement. That is the reason why the knights are deploying their ace with when the giant beast stopped its advance.

The problems with the battering ram have been briefed to all knight units, including the squad that are engaging the behemoth. They knew they can't last for long but they refuse to back down, facing the behemoth to stop its movements.

The Cardatores that are charging with the battering ram can see this scene clearly. The knight runners in their seats grip their control stick so tightly that it creaks. They step on their pedal with all their might, wanting to crash into the behemoth immediately. This is the battle where they are ready to sacrifice their lives. Even so, their wrath towards the enemy that is massacring their allies burns on. The battering ram squad roars as they charge in respond to the sacrifice of their allies.

The air intake valve plays a high pitch screech, the Cardatore charge at their maximum speed. As they close in with the beast, they are covered in the shadow of the mountain liked beast. The first battering ram reach the behemoth's side. This is not a precision weapon, so they used their momentum to aim at the biggest target which is the flank and rams it in.

The weight that requires 4 Silhouette to move has amazing destructive power. The shell being cooked by flames causing it to soften might play a part. The battering ram pierce cleanly through the shell of the behemoth into its stomach.

The stake seems to shake in that moment, the behemoth's colossal body starts to move and it howls painfully, louder than when it lost its eye. It's howl to the sky makes the ground trembles, massive amount of blood gush out from its stomach wound.

"Great! The hard crust bunker is effective! Use this chance to attack and kill it!"

Cheers erupts among the knights. They know the battering ram is difficult to use, but its power can hurt a battalion level demon beast. There are 2 more teams with battering rams and they are closing in on the giant beast. The beast is still writhing in pain, not noticing their advance. The 2 teams are aiming for the head and the other flank respectively. If they hit these two places, it will be fatal even for a fortress demon beast. Most of the knights are convinced of their victory; the battering ram team that are shouldering the entire army's hope is right before its target.

The moaning and dazed behemoth suddenly looks downwards. All the knights and Eru doesn't know what this means and was perplexed. The team that is charging with the battering ram didn't notice--

The behemoth shoots a tornado breath at the ground. The fierce wind this close to the ground digs up the earth, and the flying debris in this confined space explodes. The battering ram team was unable to evade this, the team aiming for the head was hit by flying boulders and smashed into smithereens.

Amazingly, behemoth use its stomach to withstand the explosion and the impact of the tornado and 'stood up' with this momentum. All the knights that was maintaining the encirclement of the behemoth stared at the graphic on their holo monitor in awe. The 80m long behemoth have incredible weight, and its foreleg is completely off the ground as it stands. This bizarre situation made everyone's reaction slower by a beat.

"Oh no! Danger, get away!"

The team aiming for the stomach knew something was awry before Philip shouted and attempts to dodge. But they are carrying the heavy battering ram with them and has been charging at full speed. Even if they want to retreat, they can't stop their accelerating machine in time.

Behemoth's massive body fell with the pull of gravity right on top of them. The destructive force of the gargantuan demon beast's weight is beyond that of the battering ram. It caused a small earthquake when it lands, shattering the ground and shooting debris like a shotgun to the surroundings. The dust flew sky high, covering the beast's entire body.

The battering ram team that didn't get away in time was decimated, the ram was flatten and the Silhouette Knights was beyond recognition.

This attack was too rash, and the behemoth who used it was hurt too. More

blood flows out from its gaping wound, and several cracks appears on its shell. It is not obvious, but the attack that penetrates its physical boast injured some of its internal organs, the behemoth is also desperate.

But the knights casualty was more severe. Including the squad that was attacked in the beginning, they have lost 40% of their forces, the flying boulders caused medium damage another 20%. And losing their ace seriously hurt the knights' morale. The attack they placed their hopes on was negated, this impact their psyche deeply. Anxiety higher than before seizes the knights.

The culverin held by the Cardatore are shaking, the movement of the knight runners was unconsciously transmitted to the machine. Not only the giant beast's power, even its existence brings pressure that corrodes their heart.

"..."

Güell watches the string of attack from the rear of the knights, Dietrich was trembling inside the machine. Even the special attack that sacrifices part of the knights was negated in front of the beast's strength, can they really take it down? The generous amount of fighting spirit in his heart recedes instantly. The damage to the behemoth is significant, but seeing the power he have absolute faith in failing shakes his heart. Dietrich can't make collected judgment. The thing that returns Dietrich back to normal is the angry growl from the seat in front of him.

"... unforgivable..."

Dietrich can only see the silver hair of Ernesti sitting in the seat, but he can understand the abnormal atmosphere emitting from Eru's body.

"You dare to destroy robots before my eyes!"

"Eh?"

"The only thing permitted to destroy robots... are other robots..."

"Eh eh!?"

Eru mumbles reasons unfathomable to Dietrich as he stands Güell up. Although he has a faint smile, his blue eyes differs from its usual shine, burning like a devil. As if it is channeling Eru's wrath, Güell's air intake valve screech louder,

the mana flows through all the crystal tissue in the body, the body encased in armor is full of power.

Mana pool is over 50%, the sword in its hand is serviceable and the machine is undamaged.

The scarlet knight took a step forward, Eru who has become a vengeful spirit returns to battle. The red Silhouette Knight charge at the giant beast, the cry of despair from Eru's passenger can be heard along the way.

The Land Emperor emerge slowly from the thick dust. Despite its body being covered in wounds, it can still move, displaying it's amazing endurance. Battalion level demon beast is impressive.

On closer observation, it is on its last legs. But the knights with their devastated morale lost their will to fight when they see the behemoth is still moving. They shoot their culverin in response, but their scattered efforts are ineffective. It can't even break through the weakened shell. The encirclement of the knights that was sealing the behemoth's movement also fell apart.

Commander Philip felt a strong sense of danger from the sight before him. He has issued numerous orders, but it is not easy to build up lost morale and he is growing anxious. Suddenly, a scarlet wind pierce through the loose encirclement.

The red Silhouette Knight was prominent among the earth colored Cardatores. It make a beeline for the behemoth before anyone could react.

"That is impossible we are doomed it can't be done the knights are here there is no escape ahhhhh!?"

Eru who is piloting Güell didn't even look at the knights and Dietrich's nonsensical scream didn't reach their ears. Eru's deep blue eyes lock on to the behemoth.

Leaving the knights out of his mind, Eru closes in on behemoth. Even though the behemoth is heavily wounded, it howl when the red figure in its memory appears. It ignores the gushing blood and tattered shell and move its limbs.

The gap between them disappears.

The speedier Güell has the advantage. With suffering many cracks and fractures

from the previous fight, the behemoth's defense is full of breeches. The scarlet machine turns into a whirlwind, slashing repeatedly at behemoth with its speed. The sword cuts accurately through a fissure, causing sparks and screeching noise as the shell cracks and fell to the ground.

"Sword attacks are effective! This mean the enemy is at its limit!"

Güell glides around and slash, turns back and pounce at the behemoth again, turning his evasive tactics to offense. These two have traded their position.

The knights was shocked by the scene before them. In their eyes, Güell is a machine piloted by a Laihiala pilot academy student. A student younger than the knights are standing up to the giant beast without fear and attacking it. At a glance, it seems like foolish bravery, but that is why it has a motivational effect that fire up the hearts of the knights.

"All units, assume encircle formation! Form new ranks! Renew the attack!"

The knights felt shame from losing heart before the demon beast's might and move with renewed conviction. The units with restored morale form up quickly and encircles the behemoth. Each squad took note of the scarlet machine's position and started magic attack support, restraining behemoth's movement and damaging it.

The sword of the scarlet knight peel off the shell of the beast, the culverin pierce the behemoth's legs. The attack of the giant beast is sealed and it becomes a static target board.

The table has been turned and behemoth is on the verge of defeat. This bolsters the morale of the knights and Güell moves freely. The colossal beast finally reach its limit, its shell is dropping off from the damages and its blood turns the ground into marsh. Anyone can tell the beast has lost its ability to resist.

But an unexpected ending page was flipped.

A sudden pressure assaults Eru and Dietrich out of nowhere. As Güell was turning its body to evade, the strength in one leg disappears and it leans heavily to one side. A strong force push the scarlet knight to the ground and Güell's red armor was twisted and peels off, scattering in mid air.

"What happened!?"

Eru continue to control Güell in a panic, rolling backwards and kicking off the ground with all its might. Güell finally steadies its posture with one knee on the ground.

"The behemoth didn't hit us, so why are we hurt..."

Eru shift the machine's head to scan the status of the legs, finding the joints stiff and sees shards of crystal tissue falling out from the gaps in the armor.

Eru finally understands the situation after seeing this, this was not caused by attacks. Eru made intrinsic control possible with his full control piloting. But his high output demand made Güell breaks under the heavy burden.

This long battle has also exceeded the operation time of a normal Silhouette Knight, which adds to the stress, damaging the legs which took the brunt of the burden. Living beings will be alerted through pain stimulus. But Silhouette Knights are robots without the function of reporting feedback on abnormality. You will only know when it exceeds the limit and suffers damage.

Eru frowns deeply. Güell holds the advantage because its excellent mobility. But it can't fight on with its legs busted. Eru can only abandon the machine and run for it.

There is not much time left for him to worry about this. Behemoth is rushing at the hated red machine as usual.

The culverins fired by the knights rain down on behemoth as they try to save the scarlet machine that suddenly kneeled down, but it didn't stop the giant beast. Behemoth's remaining right eye is bloodshot and full of hate, an angry howl came from its mouth. The shattered shell and flowing blood didn't faze it, the demon beast charge with the conviction to decimate everything. Its speed is much slower, but it is a death sentence for the immobile Güell.

(To break down at this timing... It's a pity, but I have to escape.)

With his capabilities, Eru can get out of the giant beast's range once he abandons the machine.

(That's right, if... it is just me.)

Eru can do it, but Dietrich behind him can't. Eru release the harness and stare at behemoth on the holo monitor. There is no time left, the charge will shatter

Güell. Eru's thinking speed reached its peak.

(It is not good for my conscience to leave senpai here... But it is not easy to survive this.)

He desperately go through all sorts of possibility. What Ernesti can do, what Dietrich can do and what Güell can do.

(... There is a way, but it is a gamble. There is only one chance, the chips are our lives... But to die with a robot is an acceptable way to go out with a bang.)

That's the best a robot nerd can hope for. Eru has no hesitation in choosing this insane option. To risk his life and fight the giant beast.

"Senpai, can you hear me?"

Eru's calmness doesn't match the situation before them. Will Dietrich sitting at the back listen? He is already in despair over their fate, mumbling as he pants. He is not acting normal.

"If you hear me, please switch with me and take over the control."

Eru tone is the same, but the strange aura in his voice made Dietrich trembles in fear.

Eru ignores him, pulling Winchester and the silver nerves to the front, almost hitting the holo monitor. Leaving the empty seat.

"It's hopeless! What can I do by piloting..."

"It doesn't matter. Sit on the chair now if you want to live."

Dietrich reacts to the words 'if you want to live'. He is on the verge of breaking down, but he still slides into the seat.

"Shit... Shit! What are we doing! What can we do!?"

"I will only say this once, so listen carefully. First..."

Part of the silver nerve was pulled along with the Winchester, but several of them is still connected to the control stick. It can still be operated normally. Once he confirms Dietrich is holding the control stick, Eru release his control from the

magius engine's domain.

Behemoth is right in front of them. It is critically wounded with nowhere to run, but its massive body is still imposing, filling their entire field of vision. Eru takes a deep breath and stares at the figure in the holo monitor and concentrates.

He push his unique skill 'the processing speed that can fully control a Silhouette Knight' to the limit and program a large scale script. It's an overed spell in scale, similar to those used by Silhouette Knights but larger.

He has a bigger mana pool than others as he has trained nonstop since childhood. But that is the standard for humans, not enough to execute tactical level spells. Even if he can process and construct the script, he can't use tactical level magic. But he is sitting on a large supply of mana right now. That's right, mana from Güell.

Silhouette Knight can't construct magic alone. Eru don't have the mana for tactical level spells. But they can cover its others weakness and Eru is executing this never seen before plan.

"~~~...!~...!!!"

Dietrich scream without realizing it. Fear made him stiff, but Dietrich believes the young boy before him and acts.

Eru focus on processing. Creating a large strong spell to the limit.

Behemoth's head is like a protruding boulder, closing in on Güell to smash it. Their distance is close enough to make out the details on the behemoth's skin.

Everything that follows happens in an instant.

Güell extends its arms as if to hug behemoth and creates an air bullet but did not fire it out, constructing an air bag. Eru uses the magic he conjured to decelerate when moving at high speed, 'air suspension' and enlarge it to tactical level.

The air cushion he made collides with the impact of the demon beast's charge. The compressed air was squeezed even tighter from the collision. A force that is still tremendous after hitting the air bag pushes at Güell. The pressure deforms the armor and blow away crystal shards.

"Now! Jump back--!"

Eru opens his eyes and shout. He heard an reaction from Dietrich. Dietrich didn't think about the content of the instruction and react on reflex -- extending his legs and push down hard on the pedal. Güell's leg is broken and can't walk, but the crystal tissue that are still working executes the command faithfully and expends all its energy.

Behemoth has broken through the air cushion and is about to pierce the scarlet knight -- Güell leaps back recklessly at this moment. The crystal tissue in the legs snap completely, but it complete its task.

"It's not over! Hang on! Hard skin!"

Eru's operation is not over, he cast armor hardening spell on Güell's front armor. At this moment, behemoth's head touch Güell and the hit lands.

Weakening the impact with air cushion, minimizing the force by jumping back and defending with hardening magic. Even with this, it didn't negate the force of the blow as the armor dents and pieces surrounding it breaks and flies off. The holo monitor in front of the pilot seat shatters, making Eru gasp.

"It is not enough after doing all this...!"

All his effort was negated, making him think about giving up. But a small blessing aided him -- The training machine used by Laihiala pilot academy place its priority on pilot safety, so the torso armor are made thicker. The front armor reinforced by Eru's magic stays true to this priority, denting heavily but still withstood the behemoth's strike, protecting its passenger completely.

Anyone would think the red machine is lost, but Güell looks like it is hugging the head of behemoth, still retaining its humanoid shape. Behemoth was baffled by the knight that didn't fall apart from its charge. The attack still carries on, behemoth advance and push Güell along.

"... If we make it through."

The time to strike back is here.

Eru grabs the control stick and move Güell's body. He only moves the robot's right wrist and lift it up and punch at behemoth's head. No matter how weak the shell is, the body of the giant beast will not be damaged by bare hands. But the

arm is not aiming for the shell, but the left eye socket.

A broken half of a sword is stuck in there. Eru grabs the broken sword and activate all the remaining mana in Güell's crystal tissue. He overrides all safety limiters, emptying all mana reserves, using all his processing power to construct the largest spell.

"Checkmate!"

After uttering this phrase softly, the largest scale lightning the world has ever seen channel through Güell's arm into the broken sword, striking the behemoth's head directly.

Behemoth is a living being and has a brain in its head. The lightning through the eye socket is conducted through the optical nerves and the blood vessels, hitting the brain directly. The large current ravage the brain of the behemoth, frying the interior components. Even the giant beast can't take it when its brain which is the control hub of living things burns.

The Land Emperor finally took its last breath.

The electric current continues to burn the nerves, making the behemoth spasm and jerk. That flings off Güell that was hugging the head onto the ground. Güell has exhaust its mana pool, so it can't even harden its structure, breaking into pieces on impact with the ground.

-- The giant beast collapse to the ground slowly.

Death comes to the powerful beast that rampaged. The ending was brutal and sudden, everyone was silent. When they comprehend the demon beast will not move again, joy spread among the knights in waves. It didn't take long for them to cheer in victory.

"... It was dangerous till the very end, any mistake and we will turn into minced meat."

The decimated Güell was in a pitiful state. The limbs have fallen off, the inner skeleton is breaking apart with the connection magic gone. Every piece of armor is battered and there is only bits of red paint left. The pilot seat was also shaken up, but Eru cast air suspension with his own mana to absorb the impact safely. Dietrich was almost crushed to death from the pilot seat's reaction force, but that was better than becoming minced meat for real.

Although this was a plan that might kill them along with the behemoth, Eru was relief to have survived. He let out a long sigh and shows a gloomy expression.

"...Ahhh... in pieces... Güell is in pieces..."

Eru ignores the unconscious Dietrich whose pupil has turned up and shakes his head, worrying about the wrong priorities.

"Ahh, I can't stay depressed. Güell, I will fix you up, please wait for me!"

Eru made a strange resolution and left the half destroyed cockpit.

Chapter 9

The sound of timber cracking can be heard repeatedly. The source is the mountain of mass-- the carcass of the Land Emperor.

When the behemoth dies, the mana supply powering the physical boost magic stops. The massive body over 80m in length can't withstand its own weight and collapse on itself. The shell armor that suffered countless cracks in the course of battle crumbles, the struts holding the body up crumbles one by one, the height falls slowly. The lower half of the body that supports the heavier weight is in shambles.

The Jantunen garrison knights cheer as the giant beast crumbles further, shooting their Silhouette Arms into the air with pride.

But the knights suffered serious casualties. That's why the ones who survive have to sing their victory song loudly as a tribute for those who fell in battle.

Some distance from the knights, 3 Silhouette Knights are advancing. Among the band of Cardatore knights, these 3 have a different appearance and stand out from the crowd.

One is the command Silhouette knight 'Sordwort' piloted by the commander Philip. Compared to the Cardatores that focus on practicality, it has a prominent regal appearance and is covered in plate armor.

Besides him is the vice commander's 'Cardiaria', a Cardatore that has been reinforced.

Behind them is the training machine from Laihiala pilot academy, 'Earl Cumber'. Its appearance is crude, but it is covered in pure white armor, giving it a different aesthetic compared to Cardatores.

They walk past the behemoth that is still crumbling and approach their target. The closer they get, the clearer the pieces with red paint is.

-- Scattered around here are the remains of the Silhouette Knight Güell.

The first thing Philip who is leading the way saw was Güell's right arm. Its skeletal structure has broken and it is bent out of shape. The trio glance at it and continue without a word, finally reaching their main objective. The torso without its head and limbs, the armor is in shambles, the crystal tissue has been utterly

destroyed. The armor protecting the chest cavity has caved in, the whole torso is misshapen. The strong frontal armor is a twisted lump, showing how strong the impact is.

(I did thought it will be like this... From the looks of things, the knight runner inside... It's hopeless...)

No one made a sound, thinking about the same thing. They had some hope, but if the impact shatters the torso, it is impossible for the pilot to survive.

Philip and Gottfried stares silently at the holo monitor. The scarlet knight from Laihiala pilot academy fought the behemoth to the last moment to protect its juniors. Compared to the knights who was on the verge of collapse, it was on the very front lines. It battles the giant beast like a burning torch of courage, taking down the behemoth with its life. Philip wonders what the pilot is like? The pilot should be a student, his future is immeasurable. The skills to take down a behemoth, the virtuous attitude to risk his life for others and the indomitable spirit to overcome the odds. He possess the 3 characteristics a knight should have. Philip have not converse with him before, but Philip gives a silent prayer for the hero who sacrificed himself honorably.

Earl Cumber moved ahead and kneels beside Güell.

Earl Cumber's front armor opens with the sound of compressed air jetting out. Edgar stands on the armor, silently looking at the remains for a while before saying"

"Di... I am late, but I still want to apologize... back then, I thought you abandoned us and escaped."

Unlike his calm tone, Edgar's expression was twisted with regret.

"I lost all respect for you at that moment... But I empathize with you too. The scenario was too dire then, I told myself 'Di won't work with us in this situation'. But... You came back."

Edgar clenched fist are trembling.

"And so... Sorry Dietrich. I don't know why you are hiding your real strength. Even so, you sacrificed yourself to save us..."

Edgar's monologue was interrupted by an explosion. Shortly after, Güell's chest

armor flew into the sky before him.

The chest armor arcs through the sky and rolls loudly when it lands.

The 3 robots follow the movement of the chest armor that blasted off and looked back at the remains by their feet. A short figure climbs out from the cockpit as they watch in awe.

"The front armor can't open because it is bent out of shape. That took some effort to get out... Eh? What's wrong everyone?"

"... Huh?"

Jantunen was under high alert because the deployment of the entire garrison knights, but the gates are fully open to welcome the return of the knights. The victorious garrison knights return in an orderly fashion, advancing slowly on the main street.

News of the behemoth's invasion has spread throughout the whole kingdom with the deployment of the knights. The citizens who were trembling from fear cheer with reckless abandon for those who returned safely. Their excitement matches that of winning a war, and in reality, defeating behemoth successfully has more value than winning a war.

Something followed the advance of the parade and the crowd was silenced when it enters the gate. That was the head of the demon beast which is much larger than a Silhouette Knight. A carriage ferries the intimidating head, even the citizens that didn't see it move know its threat. The silence spreads, and explodes in cheers twice as loud.

Everyone is singing the exploits of the knights, deepening their respect for their guardian garrison knights. Jantunen's parade reached its climax at this point.

Some distance away from main street, a quiet cafe is isolated from the bustle of the city. Most of the citizens are gathered around main street, leaving the cafe empty. There are just a few youths patronizing the shop, there are people related to this incident: Edgar, Stefania, Archid, Adeltrud and Ernesti.

"Really! You are too reckless..."

Edgar sighs and lowers the teacup in his hand. He is saying this on behalf of

everyone present. He can't help himself from commenting after hearing Eru casually describe his actions during the Land Emperor incident.

"This makes me sympathized the 'victim' who was dragged in, Di..."

After hacking into the magius engine, Eru exerts full control over the machine and fought. Just listening to this is enough to make anyone with common sense faint after screaming. The more detailed Eru's explanation, the more troubled Edgar gets. Stefania eyes are wide open and her surprise is evident. Chid and Ady are stunned, but accepts it since it is Eru. The twins look at each other and says:

"See, he hijack a Silhouette Knight as expected."

"You two, what do you mean by 'expected'? Although you are right."

Eru looks unhappy, but avert his eyes guiltily when the twins glares back.

Apart from Eru, Edgar is the only one with experience piloting Silhouette Knights. That's why he was shocked after listening to Eru, but was convinced. From what he remembers, Güell's performance was not that outstanding. If Eru didn't hack in, it wouldn't have been that powerful. But even with the facts right before him, Edgar just shakes his head. He suddenly thought of something.

"Ernesti, if Di didn't ran, what did you plan to do?"

"Nothing. I just went with the flow back then, I would probably have boarded the carriage and escaped."

Edgar's face sours. What would have happened if Güell didn't join the fray? Edgar won't be sitting here in that case, and the knight's casualty will probably double. Not only that, the behemoth might not be defeated. Without question, a medal of honor should be awarded to the petite youth in front of Edgar, but rewarding his outstanding performance is an issue because of Eru's position. Edgar bit his lips and goes into the main topic.

"We... the surviving high school pilots, will be going to Känkänen for an awards ceremony."

Edgar feels conflicted even though he is talking about such a glorious event.

"The Jantunen garrison knights will send representatives as well, probably Sir

Hallhagen and a few others. This involves a battalion level demon beast invasion, a story that worthy to be spread within the nation, no, to all nations. They say there will be a grand ceremony."

"You are right, congratulations... but you seems unhappy about it."

"The existence of the scarlet knight would be covered up for this incident... This means Ernesti's achievements will not be stated."

Stefania wears an apologetic expression and looks at the tea besides her hand. Chid and Ady understands the meaning of these words after a while and glares at Edgar. Only Eru seems unaffected and nods.

"I see. If I was a member of the knights or an official high schooler, there wouldn't be any problems."

"Hey, things will be serious if Eru wasn't there! Why can't he receive commendations?"

Chid stands up in protest. Stefania stops him with a look, sighs and explains:

"Calm down. If a normal knight performs so outstandingly, they will be promoted or commended. For high schoolers, they will be enlisted as an official knight... But we can't promote Eru this way."

"Why? Eru is obviously stronger than those run of the mill knights!?"

"Being a knight means he have to join a band of knights. He can be a member with his exceptional power, but there are few who is willing to work with a 12 year old. Working under an organization means Eru can't be willful in his actions."

"We can work something out if he is an adult... If they pass over the knights and grant honors to a 12 year old, the knights will look bad. The honor of the knights are the honor of the kingdom, no one wants that to happen."

Eru tilts his head and ask with a smile:

"I understand. Senpais are here to convince me?"

The expression of Edgar and Stefania tensed. Eru didn't say much about their expression and continues:

"Let's forget about this incident. I am satisfied with piloting an actual Silhouette Knight. Instead of asking shamelessly for rewards, doing nothing is much more relaxing. Besides, I was the one who butted in without permission. I don't want to be manipulated by others because of this incident."

Stefania nods her head in agreement.

"That won't happen, I guarantee in the name of the Serrati family."

"That's right, I will remind Sir Hallhagen."

Eru nods after receiving their promises. Unlike Eru, Chid and Ady is unable to accept this, asking with a moan:

"Eru, Is this really okay?"

"Yah, Eru's dream is to be a knight and pilot Silhouette Knights correct? Are you giving in now?"

"This is an exceptional case, I don't plan to demand for any rewards."

Seeing Eru consoling the unhappy twins, Edgar and Stefania breathe a sigh of relief. Güell and behemoth was both destroyed in the battle, a testament to the desperate situation Eru was in. Not giving any reward to Eru doesn't sit well with them either. On the flip side, they understand the order of knights won't be able to handle Eru's exceptional case well. They volunteered to convince Eru of the knights' dilemma in order to avoid using official orders to pressure Eru. They need not worry about Eru protesting violently, but the content of their speech is filled with illogical things, so they are prepared for the talks to stall. They feel grateful over Eru's generous disposition.

(Phew, that was close. I barge ahead without thinking too much, there will be tons of trouble if I made the knights lose face. Giving me a way to reject commendation cordially is a big help...)

Eru who appears to be drinking tea calmly is breaking out in cold sweat. To be honest, he was troubled over how to settle things on his ends. It is hard for Eru to do anything from his position. The other party proposing a peaceful resolution made Eru relieved.

(I did have a great time piloting. I even get to see the magius engine's script,

that is enough for a reward. And the knights owe me a favor too. Being too forceful will blow matters up, just let them bask in the glory. Also... it will be good if I can build a close relationship with the knights and the people present.)

Eru finish his tea happily as he thinks about how to resolve the matter.

The atmosphere was peaceful after ending the tense topic. The sound of cheers was ongoing all this while. They chat casually in the mean time.

-- His conscious recovers slowly. His first thing he feels is a question.

(What... What happened? That time... the demon beast...)

He felt a sharp pain next from all over his body, stimulating his mind and waking him up.

"Eh... Uguu..."

Dietrich groans from the pain of his protesting body and open his eyes. The first thing he sees is a wooden ceiling. He turn his head and observes a white drape. He was still confused, but he understands the situation before him. He is warded in a hospital like facility-- which means he is safe.

(... This means, the battle was won...?)

He shivered when he remembers the giant beast. From the situation at that time, it is impossible to save him without getting rid of the beast. Dietrich deduce from this that the battle ended somehow, and was a success since he is alive.

"Ara, you woke?"

Dietrich relaxed after deducing the crisis ended, and more importantly, he is safe. As he lies down groggily, a voice came from his side.

"This is Jantunen pilot's infirmary. You have lost conscious for over a day after the battle."

Dietrich turns his head with his eyes wide open. It's not because of the content of the speech, but the person who is saying it--

"Don't worry, you have many bruises, but no serious injuries. You are young and

will heal up in no time!"

His white clothes is almost bursting from his muscular body, and his hair was crew cut. His feet was shoulder width apart but his knees was clamped together. He is speaking in a feminine way despite having a deep voice-- This is a man.

A scream erupt suddenly and fills the entire infirmary.

A convoy comprising of carriages and Silhouette Knights are travelling along the gravel road leading from Jantunen to the capital -- Fremmevira highway.

Inside the carriage are students from Laihiala pilot academy's Knighthood faculty. The Silhouette Knights are escorts from Jantunen garrison knights. The knights are heading towards the capital for the award ceremony, and is acting as escorts since they are heading the same way.

There is a person sitting on the top of one carriage. That person is basking in the sun, watching the long convoy line under the warm sun. At the end of the line is a wagon filled with recovered Silhouette parts. The machine that was wrecked by the behemoth are turned into junk, but the most valuable torso retrieved. The damage are assessed, if the magius engine and ether reactor known as the heart is fine, it will be easier to repair. At worse, they can place the heart into a new body.

Jantunen garrison knight's wreckage have been sent to Jantunen, the ones here are the Laihiala pilot academy's robots.

The boy on top of the carriage, Ernesti looks towards the back with a blank expression. There must be parts from the scarlet Silhouette Knight on the wagon too, but it is covered by canvas so Eru can't tell where it is. The last scene of the fight with behemoth while piloting Güell flash across his mind. He feels the bump of the carriage as he reminisces.

(The action I took was a gamble largely dependent on luck. In order to avoid this, I need a machine that won't fall apart even when operating at full power... and this problem should not be entrusted to others lightly.)

Right now, Eru is the only one who can make a robot break down in such a short time, so he is the only one who wants to resolve it. He will create his personal machine one day. He need to plan for the arrival of that day.

"Eru, are you brooding over here?"

As he was feeling troubled over many things, someone approach him from behind and hugs him. There is only one person who will do that in Eru's mind. He turns to look at Ady behind him.

"Yeah, I am thinking about how to resolve the weakness in the previous battle."

"Why-- are you thinking about this again!"

Ady looks displeased as she leans forward. Ady is taller than Eru, so Eru is squashed when Ady leans in with her body weight. Eru protest as his body bends forward uncomfortably.

"I know, but I have to think it over when I have time, or it will be a problem in the future."

The pressure behind him relaxes slightly, allowing Eru to breath. Ady stops moving and her displeasure fades, replaced by a troubled expression.

"... Eru, you really... I hope you can promise me one thing."

"What promise?"

"Don't go by yourself, take us with you!"

"That's a bit..."

Eru can't see Ady's face, but he can feel her sincerity from her voice. Eru didn't turn back and looks ahead, thinking about Ady's request. He has been setting Silhouette Knights as his goals, and working towards that means...

"We might not be able to help, but..."

"Don't say that... it depends on the situation."

"Really? I can't pilot a Silhouette Knight. How about telling us what you plan to do!"

At this point, Eru can't reject her.

"I understand... I will do my best. But it is an emergency, it will have to wait."

"Hmmp! That's a cunning way to put it! Even though we can't do much, but three heads are better than one!"

"Haha, that's right, 3 of us is... 3?"

Ady's casual words made Eru think. In his heart is a famous story, and inspiration strikes.

"3 is better than 1... 3 arrows compared to 1 arrow. One arrow is easy to break, but it is hard to break if there are three. Right, it is fragile and easy to break because it is separated. That hurts... Wut arf yu dooin?"

Ady pulls both of Eru's cheek as he was spacing out.

"Pay attention when talking to others, that was rude. Hmmp!"

"That hurts... You are absolutely right, that was ill mannered of me."

Ady looks at Eru nursing his cheeks painfully and thought of a good idea. She approaches Eru from the side with a smile. Eru has a foreboding feeling looking at Ady's smile.

"Right, I know a way! Teach me how to pilot Silhouette Knights!"

"Wah-- to use this method!"

Eru groans and smiles awkwardly at Ady and wonders how did things come to this.

The roasted beef on the center of the table gives off a delicious aroma.

The cramped place around it is full of dishes. Eru's mother-- Celestina Echevarria is pouring soup into a huge bowl. Besides her is the mother of the twins Ilmatar Olter (Ilma) who arranges the freshly baked pie. The extravagant dishes made the two happy as they lay out the plates.

"Is it time for your Ady to learn to cook?"

"Hoho, it's about time. That child is always messing around with Chid."

The finished the preparation nimbly as they chat and call their family to have dinner. The 2 families gathered shortly after and ate happily.

This is the Echevarria residence. The Echevarrias and the Olters are together for a party to celebrate the safe return of their child. The parents planned to welcome them back after the field trip all along. But the children were involved in an unprecedented demon beast invasion instead.

The faces of every parents turned green when they received the news, including this 2 family. Ilma only family are the twins, her anxiety is indescribable. She can't stay alone in that state, so the Echevarrias took her in for the time being. Now, both the children and their parents have deepen their friendship.

Fortunately, the crisis was over and the children returned safely, all the families are busy and relieved.

"To be frank, it's great that everyone is safe."

Ilma watch the kids finish off the dishes and sigh. Tears well up in her eyes and fell as she relaxes. Ilma quickly cover her face.

"We made you worry. As you can see, we are not hurt... This is a miracle."

"That's great, the most important thing is that you are safe. Your appetite is good, as if nothing ever happened."

"Nomnomnom!"

"NornNornNorn!"

"Swallow your food before talking..."

Chid and Ady continues to stuff their face despite their mother's instruction. They were eating tasteless preserved food while traveling, so they are focusing on the delicacy before them.

"We heard that it was really dangerous, but you all seems fine. What did Eru do?"

"Yes. Behemoth and I beat each other up."

"Cough! Cough, cough."

Mathias choked on his food when he hears the conversation between the mother and child.

"Ara, wasn't the demon beast really big? Are you okay? Did you give it a good beating?"

"I borrowed a Silhouette Knight from a senpai so I'm okay. It was rather dangerous, but I beat it up really well and won."

"Ara ara, you can borrow Silhouette Knights? That's wonderful Eru. But don't be too reckless. It's not something you can borrow anytime you want right?"

"That's right. Luckily we have that 'good senpai' who aided me."

Mathias force himself to look away from the two of them, the others casually ignore their conversation. In some way, this family was really disciplined.

Only Eru's grandfather refrained from speaking during dinner, watching everything. After finishing, he called out to Eru.

"Eru, I want you to accompany me to someplace, alright?"

"Okay grandpa. Where are we going?"

"Erm, we are going to..."

Fremmevira Kingdom capital, Känkänen.

Located at the foot of mount Aubigne, it served as a front line fortress in the past. The highway on either side are made with robust stones, a legacy from its days as a fortress. Several layers of walls are erected with the capital at its heart. Only the outer most siege wall has defensive functions, the rest are used for zonal segregation. It's existence is a testament of the history of this city and nation.

In the center of the capital lies 'Castle Shreiber'.

The castle has traces of its days as a fortress, ancient and majestic. Even now, the tough appearance of the fortress commands respect. Its reputation as the 'kingdom of knights' are presented harmoniously, allowing all visitors feel the

pride of the city.

In the heart of castle Shreiber is an audience hall for the king to receive his guest.

It is a vast space with a high ceiling, enough for Silhouette Knights to enter comfortably. Elegant drapes are hung on all the walls in fixed interval of the pillars. A red carpet is rolled out in the center, and at its end is the throne for the king. An amazingly big seat is situated behind the throne, with a Silhouette Knight sitting on it.

That is the personal Silhouette Knight of the King -- known as the king's knight 'Raids Of Valor'. It's appearance is more elegant than any machine within Fremmevira. A cape with the same pattern of the national flag covers its shoulders, displaying the majesty of a knight standing at the very peak. Cardiarias piloted by the royal guards are positioned to the side of the hall with Raids of Valor right at the center, a powerful and intimidating scene.

Sometimes, the hall will be cramped with soldiers and Silhouette Knights, but there are only a few people here today.

A middle aged man was sitting on the throne before Raids of Valor, the 10th king of Fremmevira Kingdom, Ambrosius Tahvo Fremmevira. In front of him are Marquis Joachim Serrati and Jantunen garrison knight's commander Philip Hallhagen. According to customs, they have to address the king while kneeling on one knee with their heads down. After the king grants him permission, Philips raise his head to report.

"That concludes the report of the battle with behemoth."

King Ambrosius acknowledge with a grunt and nod after listening to the detailed report from Philip. He is holding a concise report in his hand and is browsing it as he listens.

"And the carcass of behemoth?"

"Your majesty, it's impossible for the garbage collectors to harvest a colossal beast like behemoth, I have dispatch the Silhouette Knights to assist. It should be completed in the next few days."

"I want to use its carcass to offset our losses. But our casualties are light, considering the opponent is a battalion level demon beast."

"Your majesty, Jantunen's forces are depleted, please allow me to send some reinforcement to support them."

Ambrosius focused on one point of the report as he listens to Joachim, it is the logs of the scarlet knight and its pilot Ernesti. A baffled expression appears on the king's face.

"Echevarria... Lauri's grandson? What an exceptional performance. Isn't that right, Philip? It is unbelievable, did this child really toppled the demon beast before everyone?"

"Yes your majesty, I saw it with my own eyes. I understand the content seems dubious to your majesty..."

Philip can't give a definite answer to the king with regards to this and his voice grows gradually softer. In fact, Joachim was doubtful as he listens to the conversation between them.

"I don't think you will spin such ridiculous tale, but this makes me worried... Especially this part, rewriting the script in the magius engine. If that's true, that is really marvelous."

"Half of it are rumors, but I saw it myself... and is convinced it really happened."

"I heard the same report... Only Sir Hallhagen and the knights knows the truth."

Ambrosius close his eyes. The ability to fight a behemoth is amazing, but that is only a might of one man. But it is different if he can reprogram the magic engine, that is a skill that has no precedent.

After thinking it over, he mumbles:

"... This child is too dangerous."

Philip panics when he heard this. Eru literally saved the lives of dozens of pilots with his participation. They can't commend Eru because of the state of things, but Eru accept it unconditionally, so Philip owe him a favor. He might be a youth that is much younger than him, but having fought as comrades, Philip won't forget how Eru saved his knights.

"You majesty, allow me to report. This boy might be just 12, but he is

knowledgeable and courageous. His etiquette are fine and his peers likes him. More importantly, he was always on the front line during the battle with the behemoth..."

Ambrosius stopped Philip's words with a wave.

"Don't worry, I am not planning to do anything to him. It might be fine now, but you says he is just 12 years of age. Having amazing power at such a tender age... Since he is just a 12 years old boy, he might grow wild with his exceptional strength. That's my worry."

Ambrosius is right to be worried. No matter how talented or pure in character, people can change with the passage of time. Especially a 12 years old who is moving into a rebellious and emotional age. If he grows arrogant because of his talent, it will harm him in the end.

But inside Ernesti is a soul with 40 years of experience, so normal conventions don't apply to him. But that is beyond their imagination, so they are worried that Eru will stray from the right path in the future.

"If that's the case, what should we do."

"Since he doesn't chase mindlessly after glory, he might become a great knight... We need to guide him. It might be unnecessary since Lauri is there. Hmm, alright... Arrange for Ernesti to meet me."

After Ambrosius issues his orders, Joachim and Philip bows and acknowledge.



ナイツ&マジック

Knight's & Magic **1**

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